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Convention on the
Rights of the Child

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COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

Twentieth session

SUMMARY RECORD (PARTIAL)** OF THE 531st MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Friday, 29 January 1999, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Miss MASON

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CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS OF STATES PARTIES (continued)

DRAFT PROVISIONAL AGENDA FOR THE TWENTY-FIRST SESSION

ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON ITS TWENTIETH SESSION

CLOSURE OF THE SESSION

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* No summary record was prepared for the 525th to 530th meetings.

** No summary record was prepared for the first part of the meeting (closed).

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GE.99-40327 (E)

The discussion covered in the summary record began at 12.45 p.m.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS OF STATES PARTIES (agenda item 4) (continued)

Adoption of concluding observations

1. The CHAIRPERSON invited the Committee to adopt its concluding observations concerning the initial and second periodic reports of States parties considered at its twentieth session.

Initial report of Austria (CRC/C/11/Add.14)

2. The concluding observations concerning the initial report of Austria were adopted.

Initial report of Belize (CRC/C/3/Add.46)

3. The concluding observations concerning the initial report of Belize were adopted.

Initial report of Guinea (CRC/C/3/Add.48)

4. The concluding observations concerning the initial report of Guinea were adopted.

Second periodic report of Sweden (CRC/C/65/Add.3)

5. The concluding observations concerning the second periodic report of Sweden were adopted.

Second periodic report of Yemen (CRC/C/70/Add.1)

6. The concluding observations concerning the second periodic report of Yemen were adopted.

DRAFT PROVISIONAL AGENDA FOR THE TWENTY-FIRST SESSION (CRC/C/84, chap. IV)

7. The draft provisional agenda for the twenty-first session was adopted.

ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON ITS TWENTIETH SESSION (CRC/C/84)

8. The CHAIRPERSON, introducing the draft report of the Committee on its twentieth session (CRC/C/84), briefly reviewed the main chapters: organizational and other matters, reports by States parties under article 44 of the Convention and overview of the other activities of the Committee. In that latter chapter, emphasis was placed on cooperation with United Nations and other competent bodies, the question of the draft optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflicts, the question of the draft optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the prevention of the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography and the future thematic debate on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the Convention, entitled "The Convention on the Rights of the Child: a decade of achievements and challenges". If

there was no objection, she would take it that the Committee wished to adopt the draft report on its twentieth session as a whole.

9. It was so decided.

CLOSURE OF THE SESSION

10. The CHAIRPERSON said that the twentieth session would be her last not only as Chairperson, but as a member of the Committee. The eight years she had spent on the Committee had been extremely rewarding. After thanking the members of the Committee, including past members, and all the Secretariat staff, she declared the twentieth session of the Committee on the Rights of the Child closed.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.

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COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

Twenty-first session

SUMMARY RECORD (PARTIAL)* OF THE 532nd MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Monday, 17 May 1999, at 10.30 a.m.

Temporary Chairperson: Mr. RABAH

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OPENING OF THE SESSION

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

SOLEMN DECLARATION BY THE NEWLY ELECTED MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

ELECTION OF THE OFFICERS OF THE COMMITTEE

SUBMISSION OF REPORTS BY STATES PARTIES IN ACCORDANCE WITH ARTICLE 44 OF THE CONVENTION

* No summary record was prepared for the rest of the meeting (closed).

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GE.99-42006 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.35 a.m.

OPENING OF THE SESSION

1. The TEMPORARY CHAIRPERSON declared open the twenty-first session of the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

2. Mr. AGUILAR URBINA (Chief, Support Services Branch, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights) extended a warm welcome to the Committee on the occasion of the opening of its twenty-first session, and congratulated the members of the Committee who had been newly elected or re-elected at the seventh meeting of States parties to the Convention. He assured all members of the Secretariat's firm resolve to assist the Committee in carrying out its duties; in that connection, two new professional staff members had joined the High Commissioner's Plan of Action team.

3. He thanked Mr. Fulci for his participation in the teleconference recently held by the Bureaux of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and the Commission on Human Rights. At that conference, Mr. Fulci had drawn attention to issues of crucial importance to both the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the other human rights treaty bodies. That was particularly significant because the Commission on Human Rights did not have a history of according high priority to matters concerning the treaty bodies.

4. The forthcoming commemoration of the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child would provide an opportunity to review and strengthen the child rights dimension in all human rights mechanisms. At its recently concluded fifty-fifth session, the Commission on Human Rights had devoted a special meeting to an interactive dialogue on the rights of the child, which had contributed to a better understanding of the human rights implications of the marginalization and exclusion of children, and to identifying ways in which the Commission and other human rights bodies could act to protect the most vulnerable groups of children. The Chairperson of the fifty-fifth session had expressed the wish to meet the Committee for an exchange of views on that subject. The Commission had adopted a number of resolutions relevant to the rights of the child, details of which had been included in the Committee's files for the current session. In July, ECOSOC would hold a special ceremony to celebrate the tenth anniversary. In addition, the Office of the High Commissioner planned to hold a two-day meeting during the Committee's twenty-second session in order to highlight achievements and challenges in the implementation of the Convention and identify ways of introducing improvements.

5. Members would be aware that the International Labour Conference, currently under way, would be considering a draft ILO convention aimed at prohibiting and eliminating the worst forms of child labour. In March 1999, the Commission on the Status of Women had adopted an Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which contained communication and inquiry procedures. Meanwhile the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, at its recently concluded session, had discussed draft general comments on the right to education.

6. The Committee had been invited to participate in a workshop on gender mainstreaming for special rapporteurs and chairpersons of treaty bodies,

scheduled to be held from 26 to 28 May 1998. In the context of the eleventh meeting of persons chairing the human rights treaty bodies, which would take place from 31 May to 4 June 1999, a joint session would be organized on 2 June with participants in the sixth meeting of special rapporteurs/ representatives/experts and chairpersons of working groups of the special procedures system of the Commission on Human Rights and of the advisory services programme.

7. Finally, two independent experts, Ms. Anne Bayefsky and Mr. Christof Heyns, were conducting a study of the treaty bodies with a view to providing the High Commissioner with a thorough analysis of the workings of the treaty system; Ms. Bayevsky had requested a meeting with the Committee to discuss her work.

8. Mrs. SARDENBERG, observing that membership rotation was an essential principle in the composition of United Nations bodies, welcomed the new members and expressed her hope that the Committee would continue to work together as a team. She also welcomed the new members of the staff, and requested further information regarding plans for the celebration of the tenth anniversary of the Convention. Finally, she applauded the Commission on the Status of Women for adopting the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which was a major new development. In her view, renewed consideration should be given to the matter of the girl child, particularly since a conference scheduled for the following year would be reviewing the results of the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA (item 1 of the provisional agenda) (CRC/C/85)

9. The provisional agenda (CRC/C/85) was adopted.

SOLEMN DECLARATION BY THE NEWLY ELECTED MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE (agenda item 2)

10. The TEMPORARY CHAIRPERSON invited the members newly elected at the seventh meeting of States parties to make the solemn declaration provided for in rule 15 of the provisional rules of procedure.

11. He said that Mrs. Karp and Mrs. Ouedraogo, who had been re-elected at the seventh meeting of States parties and who were unable to attend the current meeting, would make the declaration at the morning meeting of the following day.

12. Mr. DOEK, Mrs. EL-GUINDI and Mrs. TIGERSTEDT-TÄHTELÄ made the following declaration: "I solemnly declare that I will perform my duties and exercise my powers as a member of the Committee on the Rights of the Child honourably, faithfully, impartially and conscientiously."

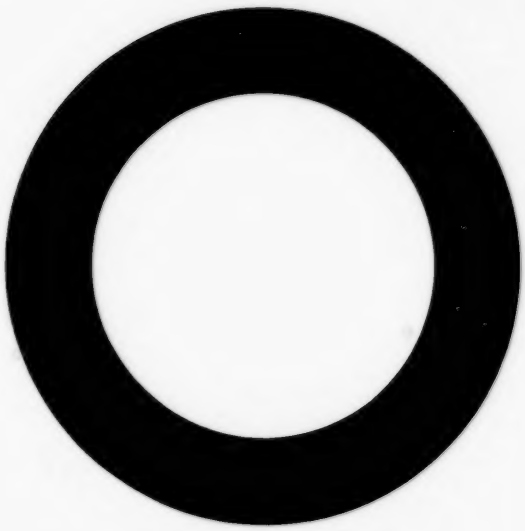
ELECTION OF THE OFFICERS OF THE COMMITTEE (agenda item 3)

13. The TEMPORARY CHAIRPERSON said that, at the request of one member, the Committee would elect the officers of the Committee at the morning meeting of the following day.

SUBMISSION OF REPORTS BY STATES PARTIES IN ACCORDANCE WITH ARTICLE 44 OF THE CONVENTION (agenda item 5)

14. Mr. DAVID (Secretary of the Committee) said that since the previous session, two initial reports had been received, those of Côte d'Ivoire and Bhutan, and three periodic reports, those of Chile, Tunisia and Belgium. To date, a total of 156 reports had been submitted, 133 initial reports and 23 periodic reports; of those, the Committee had thus far considered 98. Fifty-seven initial reports and 100 periodic reports were overdue.

The discussion covered in the summary record ended at 11 a.m.



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COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

Twenty-first session

SUMMARY RECORD (PARTIAL)* OF THE 533rd MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Tuesday, 18 May 1999, at 10 a.m.

Temporary Chairperson: Mr. RABAH
Chairperson: Mrs. MBOI

CONTENTS

ELECTION OF THE OFFICERS OF THE COMMITTEE (continued)

SOLEMN DECLARATION BY THE NEWLY ELECTED MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE (continued)

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS OF STATES PARTIES

Initial report of Barbados

* No summary record was prepared for the rest of the meeting (closed).

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GE.99-42021 (E)

The discussion covered in the summary record began at 11 a.m.

ELECTION OF THE OFFICERS OF THE COMMITTEE (agenda item 3) (continued)

1. The TEMPORARY CHAIRPERSON announced that, following consultations with the members of the Committee concerning the election of officers, Mrs. Mboi had been elected the new Chairperson of the Committee. Mrs. El Guindi, Mr. Rabah and Mrs. Sardenberg, had been elected Vice-Chairpersons and Mr. Doek had been elected Rapporteur.

SOLEMN DECLARATION BY THE NEWLY ELECTED MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE (agenda item 2) (continued)

2. The TEMPORARY CHAIRPERSON invited those members of the Committee who had been elected at the seventh meeting of States parties to make the solemn declaration provided for in rule 15 of the provisional rules of procedure.

3. Mrs. KARP and Mrs. OUEDRAOGO made the following declaration: "I solemnly declare that I will perform my duties and exercise my powers as a member of the Committee on the Rights of the Child honourably, faithfully, impartially and conscientiously."

4. Mrs. Mboi took the Chair.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS OF STATES PARTIES (agenda item 6)

Initial report of Barbados (CRC/C/3/Add.45; HRI/CORE/1/Add.64/Rev.1; CRC/C/Q/BAR/1)

5. At the invitation of the Chairperson, the members of the delegation of Barbados took places at the Committee table.

6. The CHAIRPERSON welcomed the delegation of Barbados, in particular Miss Mason, whose presence would make the Committee's work easier, since she was a previous Chairperson of the Committee and was therefore already familiar with its procedures.

7. Mr. GRIFFITH (Barbados) said that his country was aware of the importance of ensuring the best possible quality of life for children as provided for in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Children were entitled to enjoy a wholesome and enabling environment, especially in their formative years, as well as a warm relationship with their parents or substitute parents. In those conditions, children would have the opportunity to maximize their potential and become the well-rounded and productive citizens that the country needed.

8. Since the submission of the initial report, a number of important steps had been taken to bring Barbados closer to achieving the goals set out in the Convention. In 1998 the Government, in conjunction with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and regional and international agencies, had hosted the first ever Caribbean Youth Summit, which had brought together young people under the age of 19 from 20 Caribbean countries. The summit had focused on reproductive health with specific reference to children. There was a clear

understanding across the region that policies and programmes for the young would succeed only if young people were involved in formulating and implementing them. Barbados had also established a national committee for monitoring the rights of the child, whose members included representatives of government agencies, the private sector, religious communities, law enforcement bodies, the teaching profession, social services, the legal sector and the Family Planning Association.

9. Barbados' report should have been submitted at the previous session of the Committee, but had been delayed by the general election on 20 January. The new Government had created a Ministry of Social Transformation which was primarily responsible for child care, poverty eradication and rationalizing social service agencies, especially those whose work affected children and their families. It was essential to help parents, guardians and adults in general to improve their understanding of children's issues. The Ministry was also responsible for giving a voice to vulnerable groups in society. The Government was in the process of amalgamating social service agencies previously administered by several different ministries, in order to increase productivity and thus improve children's quality of life. The Ministry had also established a Bureau of Gender Affairs to address the needs of both men and women and to look at the impact of gender issues on children.

10. Another of the Ministry's responsibilities was to promote the enactment of legislation prohibiting discrimination against the physically and mentally disabled. A disability unit had been created to focus on their needs. The State was also encouraging NGO action for the benefit of the homeless and was providing shelters for homeless men where they could receive counselling and participate in programmes designed to help them to lead more independent and productive lives. A task force on vagrancy and homelessness had recently been set up to help people who fell through the welfare net.

11. Barbados attached high priority to the question of advocacy. A weekly radio programme entitled "Family Life Issues" included a "Youth in Focus" section, planned and hosted by young people, which highlighted issues of family life especially relevant to children. The programme aired young people's views on the problems they faced and possible solutions.

12. If action on behalf of children was to succeed, appropriate budgetary allocations needed to be made. The report gave full details of increased allocations to the Child Care Board, a statutory body with responsibility for the care and protection of children. It was recognized that basic child care could not be improved without investing in training and a national certification programme had accordingly been established, with input from various relevant institutions and bodies. The programme was designed for both government-owned and private child-care centres and had been successfully completed by almost 100 people to date. A telethon organized by the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation had raised money for the refurbishment of a children's home, which would be used as a model for similar projects.

13. Improving awareness of child abuse was a top priority for the Government. The number of referrals for child abuse had increased and it was still unclear whether that was due to a higher incidence of abuse or an increase in the number of people reporting it, although the Government

believed the latter to be true. However, continued action to prevent child abuse should eventually result in a decline in the number of cases. Parent-teacher associations and church and youth groups, among others, had invited the Government to become involved in discussions on child abuse, adoption and foster care, adolescent sexuality, and other issues affecting young children.

14. Turning to the challenges ahead, he said that the Child Care Board was experiencing difficulty in filling the extra posts it had created for trained social workers. In response to concern about inadequate facilities for physically and mentally challenged children, he had been given the task of ensuring that a proposal was submitted which would outline the steps needed to remedy the situation. The harmful influence of the media and the lack of parental guidance in that respect were further sources of concern.

15. The Government's recent manifesto had included a pledge to introduce legislation which would make the reporting of suspected cases of child abuse mandatory. He anticipated some resistance to such laws, but the rights of vulnerable children ought to take priority over professional confidentiality requirements. Anxiety about the increasing number of children orphaned as a result of the AIDS epidemic had prompted the launch of public education campaigns aimed at curbing its spread. Similarly, reproductive health and rights education had been included in the curriculum of primary and secondary schools in an effort to consolidate the downward trend in teenage births. The theme for Child Month 1999 was "Children, rights come with responsibility", as it was firmly believed that children should be empowered to take control of their own actions and not be influenced by passing fashions.

16. The CHAIRPERSON thanked Mr. Griffith for his statement and invited the Committee members to make comments and raise any questions they might have.

17. Mrs. SARDENBERG said that, while she was disappointed by the lack of facts and figures in the report, Barbardos' high rating on the human development index meant that the island was well placed to improve the situation of children. She first asked how the Barbadian Parliament participated in the implementation of the Convention. Had the Government considered acceding to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment? What provision had been made for the Government to take charge of the overall coordination of activities to implement the Convention? Why had the Child Care Board been responsible for preparing the report? What bodies were represented on the National Committee? Were there any plans to introduce a global strategy for implementation of the Convention?

18. Mr. FULCI commended the quality of the report which was comprehensive and self-critical. However, the data it contained were not sufficiently detailed and there was no assessment of the progress achieved and difficulties encountered in the implementation of relevant laws. He praised the Government of Barbados for calling on many sectors of civil society to collaborate in the drafting of the report. In the light of paragraphs 13 to 21 of the report, he asked what measures had been adopted or were planned to make the Convention better known in Barbados. Did human rights education, including children's rights, form part of the school curriculum?

19. Mrs. OUEDRAOGO said that there were gaps in the report. She inquired about the problems which had led to its late submission. How was the need to protect children against the adverse effects of the structural adjustment programme reflected in Barbados' new strategy to combat poverty? Had the Child Care Board been reorganized after ratification of the Convention in order to comply with its requirements? How did the Board coordinate implementation at local and national level? Had the National Plan of Action on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children achieved any results in respect of children's rights? Had information from the reports referred to in paragraph 12 been included in the initial report and had those reports been discussed beforehand?

20. Mrs. MOKHUANE endorsed her colleagues' comments about the high quality of the report, but since the Committee was aware that domestic legislation in Barbados was not keeping pace with economic and social changes, she wished to know how national laws were addressing the higher incidence of divorce, single parenthood and poverty. How were budgetary resources distributed at regional level? What constraints had there been on resource allocation? How had the spin-off from the structural adjustment programme benefited children? What programmes or activities were in place to improve the lot of children? Given the shortage of social workers in Barbados, what financial incentives or programmes existed to encourage adults and young people to take up social work as a profession?

The meeting was suspended at 11.55 a.m. and resumed at 12.05 p.m.

21. Mr. GRIFFITH (Barbados), responding to the question concerning Parliament's involvement in disseminating information on the rights of the child, pointed out that Barbados was a tiny country with good communications. The Minister of Social Transformation took a close interest in matters concerning the Convention and, in connection with Child Month activities, had given numerous radio and television interviews. There were 28 parliamentary constituencies, each branch of which had invited the Child Care Board and relevant non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to contribute their views on appropriate child-care activities. Parliament attached great importance to children's issues; not only were sessions of the House of Assembly devoted to them, but so were constituency meetings, so that children's issues and the impact of legal measures on children were discussed nationwide.

22. Replying to the question concerning the economic impact of the structural adjustment programme he said that the budget allocated to the Child Care Board had gradually diminished over the years from $10.5 million to $7.5 million, with the result that a number of programmes had slowed to a crawl, if not to a total halt. However, it had been increased in recent years by $1 million per year, bringing the figure for 1999-2000 to $12.5 million. The increase had enabled the Board to introduce new programmes, refurbish buildings, fill all vacant posts and even create new posts.

23. One major achievement was the 100 per cent increase in the foster-care allowance. Television broadcasts had been devoted to the subject of foster care, with the participation of both foster parents and foster children.

24. Ms. CRAWFORD (Barbados) said that the Child Care Board was a statutory body devoted to children's issues, which maintained close contact with the organizations represented on the National Committee for the Implementation of the Rights of the Child. It was composed of representatives of the judiciary, the trade unions and youth organizations, and provided a forum for interdisciplinary discussions.

25. It had taken 46 months to prepare the initial report. The responses of NGOs, the various ministries and the general public, although late in coming, had eventually been incorporated in a draft document, which had been widely distributed to ensure that everyone was aware of the Board's work. The document dealt inter alia with juvenile justice and children whose parents were infected with the HIV/AIDS virus or had died of AIDS. While HIV-infected children were usually cared for within the family, the Child Care Board intervened when necessary to provide appropriate care.

26. The Ministry of Social Transformation had formulated a special poverty alleviation programme which had been allocated a budget of $11 million in 1999, on the assumption that poverty reduction would benefit children as a whole.

27. In response to the question concerning the shortage of social workers, she said that the problem was one of availability. However, for the past four years the Cave Hill campus of the University of the West Indies, located in Barbados, had been offering a degree in social work. Originally designed for partially trained staff, it was currently open to others as well.

28. The CHAIRPERSON asked whether Barbados had any special incentives in place to encourage young people to become social workers.

29. Ms. CRAWFORD (Barbados) replied that, while there were no special incentives, there was ongoing activity involving annual visits to schools in order to encourage young people to take up the profession.

30. Miss MASON (Barbados), after congratulating Mrs. Mboi on her election, thanked the Committee for the warm welcome it had extended to her on her return, no longer as Chairperson of the Committee, but as a representative of her country which she wished to portray in a true and honest light.

31. In response to Mrs. Sardenberg's question, she said that Barbados had not ratified the Convention against Torture. The country was revisiting the various conventions it had not yet ratified - in exercise of its sovereign right - with a view to deciding for or against ratification and speeding up action on those it decided to ratify. She was not certain what the Government's final decision would be, but the delegation would raise the matter on its return home.

32. On the question whether the 1992 Plan of Action had been abandoned, and another concerning its medium-term impact on children's rights, she said that Barbados had attained the milestones set by the World Summit for Children, making the plan obsolete. The National Committee intended to draw up a new programme, for which purpose three subcommittees had been established to

examine separate issues. Barbadian legislation was almost entirely in conformity with the Convention on the Rights of the Child; indeed many of its provisions predated the Convention.

33. In reply to the question whether domestic legislation had kept pace with socio-economic developments and whether the laws governing divorce, custody, property and the family were continually monitored, she said that the authorities had realized in 1976 that the country was in an anomalous situation - albeit one considered quite normal in the Caribbean - where unmarried couples constituted 50 per cent of families. The Government had decided that the progeny of such households needed to be protected and had instituted for such couples, provided they had cohabited for at least five years, a legal category of "unions other than marriage". The rights of such children were further protected by the Status of Children Reform Act. In custody cases, the judge, on the advice of social workers, ruled on the basis of an objective examination of each parent's situation, according the utmost importance to reasonable access by the other parent. Also, under the Family Law Act, a divorce did not become absolute until all issues relating to minor offspring had been resolved to the satisfaction of the court.

34. Poverty alleviation was also given priority by the Ministry of Social Transformation, and was discussed daily on call-in radio programmes, in which the general public aired its views.

35. Concerning the measures taken to make the Convention on the Rights of the Child more widely known, she said that prior to the establishment of a monitoring committee in September 1998, some efforts had been made to that end, with UNICEF in an advocacy role. Many local and regional public meetings were held to discuss the Convention, and both UNICEF and the Child Care Board were instrumental in promoting children's rights. The Convention was given exposure by the media, and two colloquia on the rights of the child had been held, one in November 1998, the other in March 1999. In addition, human rights were taught in schools under the heading "Civics and citizenship".

36. Mr. GRIFFITH (Barbados), replying to the question concerning the Child Care Board's role as a focal point, said that it had a 12-member Board of Directors which included teachers and social workers and was directly answerable to the Ministry of Social Transformation, which in turn was legally responsible to the Cabinet. With the establishment of the Board, more energy was being invested in child-related activities. It was not a static body; some members were reappointed, while others departed. He himself had been its Chairman since 1994.

37. Ms. CRAWFORD (Barbados), replying to a question from Ms. Mokhuane, said that it was impractical for a small country like Barbados to undertake regional activities and that all the programmes were centralized. The Ministry of Social Transformation had a child-care budget, which was subsequently allocated to the Child Care Board, in accordance with each department's programmes and plan of action. The fact that the budget for child-related activities had risen from $38 million in 1995 to the current level of $68 million attested to the importance the authorities attached to children and the family.

38. The CHAIRPERSON invited the members of the Committee to raise additional questions.

39. Mrs. KARP commended the Government of Barbados for having established the Committee on the Implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It would be useful to know whether that committee had undertaken to review national legislation to assess its conformity with both the letter and the spirit of the Convention. What portion of the budget was allocated to its work?

40. She felt that the Government's policy concerning pornography, which took into account photographs but not the communications media or the Internet, should be re-evaluated. In addition, judges in Barbados were expected to respect the wishes of children over the age of 16 in custody disputes; the Convention, however, called for decisions of that kind to be made in accordance not with a child's age but with his/her evolving capacities.

41. It would be useful to know whether the Barbados Government had a strategy for working with NGOs in the matter of child policy, and whether resources were allocated for that purpose. She also wondered whether approaches to parental counselling services incorporated ideas about childhood that reflected the spirit of the Convention, in particular with regard to such matters as abuse and incest.

42. The Child Care Board played a central advocacy role on behalf of children. But its name, which suggested the concept of protection, should perhaps be changed to reflect a child rights approach, and to convey the idea that it worked on behalf of all children, not just those with special needs.

43. Finally, it would be helpful to know whether the Government had considered the development of indicators in such areas as freedom of speech and the right to education, which would demonstrate the degree of success in implementing the terms of the Convention.

44. Mrs. MOKHUANE said that the report indicated that, in practice, a Barbadian child became an adult at the age of 16. It also suggested that a judge had discretion to determine whether a child was sufficiently mature to make his/her own decisions. In view of the shortage of professional social workers in Barbados, the question arose what assistance was provided to the judge in making such a determination. Furthermore, there was no question that children aged seven were too young to assume criminal responsibility. At that age, children tried to avoid punishment in order to please their parents, but had not yet developed a sense of right or wrong.

45. Mr. DOEK inquired whether the Child Care Board was empowered to investigate cases of child abuse and bring them to the attention of the courts.

46. Mrs. TIGERSTEDT-TAHTELA, noting the central role of the Child Care Board, inquired whether Barbados had no municipal bodies to handle matters of social welfare.

47. Mr. RABAH requested further information on Child Month, in particular whether the Convention was distributed to participants, both children and parents, and whether events designed to teach children their rights were included in the programme.

48. It would also be useful to know whether a child benefited from legal representation when appearing before the courts, and whether it was in fact the case that a child could not obtain legal or medical counselling without parental consent. The report indicated that a child over the age of 15 and under the age of 18 was allowed to work, but not at night or during school hours. What in fact were "school hours"? What measures were taken to implement the relevant legislation? Furthermore, did the minimum age for marriage apply both to girls and to boys? Finally, children under the age of 18 should not be sent to prison: the Government should consider alternative means of handling young people whose behaviour constituted a serious problem.

49. Mrs. OUEDRAOGO, observing that Child Month had been celebrated in Barbados since 1967, inquired whether the form and content of that event had changed since the ratification of the Convention, and to what extent the public participated. What, in the Government's view, was the impact of Child Month on the successful implementation of the Convention?

50. She also wished to know to what extent the report had been publicized, and what, the public reaction to it had been. Had it sparked any debate or discussion?

51. The report mentioned legislation that prohibited holders of liquor licences from selling to minors, but made no mention of other vendors or the use of alcohol in the home. What other laws were in place to prevent the use of alcohol by children, and what measures had been taken to implement them? Had the Government considered conducting an awareness and education campaign to discourage alcohol use by children?

52. Furthermore, the report was not clear about the age at which a child was permitted to work; clarification would be welcome. What measures were taken to prevent children from working during school hours? Finally, the Government should clearly establish the age at which a child was permitted to consult a lawyer.

53. Mrs. SARDENBERG said that she welcomed the establishment of a national programme of action for children. However, since it did not cover all the issues addressed by the Convention, the Government should consider the development of a broad national strategy. What stage had Barbados reached in the preparation of a budget that reflected the needs of children? Information was needed on the relationship between the Government and NGOs, and, in particular, on how the independence and impartiality of NGOs was protected.

54. She was aware that Barbadian society was resistant to the notion of the child as a subject of law; comments would be welcome regarding the role of the child in the family and in society. Did the Convention have an impact on that role?

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.

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CRC

Convention on the
Rights of the Child

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27 May 1999

Original: ENGLISH

COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

Twenty-first session

SUMMARY RECORD (PARTIAL)* OF THE 534th MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Tuesday, 18 May 1999, at 10 a.m.

Temporary Chairperson: Mr. RABAH
Chairperson: Mrs. MBOI

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ELECTION OF THE OFFICERS OF THE COMMITTEE (continued)

SOLEMN DECLARATION BY THE NEWLY ELECTED MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE (continued)

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS OF STATES PARTIES

Initial report of Barbados

* No summary record was prepared for the rest of the meeting (closed).

** The document issued as CRC/C/SR.533, summary record of the meeting held on Tuesday, 18 May 1999 at 10 a.m., is replaced by the present document.

This record is subject to correction.

Corrections should be submitted in one of the working languages. They should be set forth in a memorandum and also incorporated in a copy of the record. They should be sent within one week of the date of this document to the Official Records Editing Section, room E.4108, Palais des Nations, Geneva.

Any corrections to the records of the public meetings of the Committee at this session will be consolidated in a single corrigendum, to be issued shortly after the end of the session.

GE.99-42131 (E)

The discussion covered in the summary record began at 11 a.m.

ELECTION OF THE OFFICERS OF THE COMMITTEE (agenda item 3) (continued)

1. The TEMPORARY CHAIRPERSON announced that, following consultations with the members of the Committee concerning the election of officers, Mrs. Mboi had been elected the new Chairperson of the Committee. Mrs. El Guindi, Mr. Rabah and Mrs. Sardenberg, had been elected Vice-Chairpersons and Mr. Doek had been elected Rapporteur.

SOLEMN DECLARATION BY THE NEWLY ELECTED MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE (agenda item 2) (continued)

2. The TEMPORARY CHAIRPERSON invited those members of the Committee who had been elected at the seventh meeting of States parties to make the solemn declaration provided for in rule 15 of the provisional rules of procedure.

3. Mrs. KARP and Mrs. OUEDRAOGO made the following declaration: "I solemnly declare that I will perform my duties and exercise my powers as a member of the Committee on the Rights of the Child honourably, faithfully, impartially and conscientiously."

4. Mrs. Mboi took the Chair.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS OF STATES PARTIES (agenda item 6)

Initial report of Barbados (CRC/C/3/Add.45; HRI/CORE/1/Add.64/Rev.1; CRC/C/Q/BAR/1)

5. At the invitation of the Chairperson, the members of the delegation of Barbados took places at the Committee table.

6. The CHAIRPERSON welcomed the delegation of Barbados, in particular Miss Mason, whose presence would make the Committee's work easier, since she was a previous Chairperson of the Committee and was therefore already familiar with its procedures.

7. Mr. GRIFFITH (Barbados) said that his country was aware of the importance of ensuring the best possible quality of life for children as provided for in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Children were entitled to enjoy a wholesome and enabling environment, especially in their formative years, as well as a warm relationship with their parents or substitute parents. In those conditions, children would have the opportunity to maximize their potential and become the well-rounded and productive citizens that the country needed.

8. Since the submission of the initial report, a number of important steps had been taken to bring Barbados closer to achieving the goals set out in the Convention. In 1998 the Government, in conjunction with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and regional and international agencies, had hosted the first ever Caribbean Youth Summit, which had brought together young people under the age of 19 from 20 Caribbean countries. The summit had focused on reproductive health with specific reference to children. There was a clear

understanding across the region that policies and programmes for the young would succeed only if young people were involved in formulating and implementing them. Barbados had also established a national committee for monitoring the rights of the child, whose members included representatives of government agencies, the private sector, religious communities, law enforcement bodies, the teaching profession, social services, the legal sector and the Family Planning Association.

9. Barbados' report should have been submitted at the previous session of the Committee, but had been delayed by the general election on 20 January. The new Government had created a Ministry of Social Transformation which was primarily responsible for child care, poverty eradication and rationalizing social service agencies, especially those whose work affected children and their families. It was essential to help parents, guardians and adults in general to improve their understanding of children's issues. The Ministry was also responsible for giving a voice to vulnerable groups in society. The Government was in the process of amalgamating social service agencies previously administered by several different ministries, in order to increase productivity and thus improve children's quality of life. The Ministry had also established a Bureau of Gender Affairs to address the needs of both men and women and to look at the impact of gender issues on children.

10. Another of the Ministry's responsibilities was to promote the enactment of legislation prohibiting discrimination against the physically and mentally disabled. A disability unit had been created to focus on their needs. The State was also encouraging NGO action for the benefit of the homeless and was providing shelters for homeless men where they could receive counselling and participate in programmes designed to help them to lead more independent and productive lives. A task force on vagrancy and homelessness had recently been set up to help people who fell through the welfare net.

11. Barbados attached high priority to the question of advocacy. A weekly radio programme entitled "Family Life Issues" included a "Youth in Focus" section, planned and hosted by young people, which highlighted issues of family life especially relevant to children. The programme aired young people's views on the problems they faced and possible solutions.

12. If action on behalf of children was to succeed, appropriate budgetary allocations needed to be made. The report gave full details of increased allocations to the Child Care Board, a statutory body with responsibility for the care and protection of children. It was recognized that basic child care could not be improved without investing in training and a national certification programme had accordingly been established, with input from various relevant institutions and bodies. The programme was designed for both government-owned and private child-care centres and had been successfully completed by almost 100 people to date. A telethon organized by the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation had raised money for the refurbishment of a children's home, which would be used as a model for similar projects.

13. Improving awareness of child abuse was a top priority for the Government. The number of referrals for child abuse had increased and it was still unclear whether that was due to a higher incidence of abuse or an increase in the number of people reporting it, although the Government

believed the latter to be true. However, continued action to prevent child abuse should eventually result in a decline in the number of cases. Parent-teacher associations and church and youth groups, among others, had invited the Government to become involved in discussions on child abuse, adoption and foster care, adolescent sexuality, and other issues affecting young children.

14. Turning to the challenges ahead, he said that the Child Care Board was experiencing difficulty in filling the extra posts it had created for trained social workers. In response to concern about inadequate facilities for physically and mentally challenged children, he had been given the task of ensuring that a proposal was submitted which would outline the steps needed to remedy the situation. The harmful influence of the media and the lack of parental guidance in that respect were further sources of concern.

15. The Government's recent manifesto had included a pledge to introduce legislation which would make the reporting of suspected cases of child abuse mandatory. He anticipated some resistance to such laws, but the rights of vulnerable children ought to take priority over professional confidentiality requirements. Anxiety about the increasing number of children orphaned as a result of the AIDS epidemic had prompted the launch of public education campaigns aimed at curbing its spread. Similarly, reproductive health and rights education had been included in the curriculum of primary and secondary schools in an effort to consolidate the downward trend in teenage births. The theme for Child Month 1999 was "Children, rights come with responsibility", as it was firmly believed that children should be empowered to take control of their own actions and not be influenced by passing fashions.

16. The CHAIRPERSON thanked Mr. Griffith for his statement and invited the Committee members to make comments and raise any questions they might have.

17. Mrs. SARDENBERG said that, while she was disappointed by the lack of facts and figures in the report, Barbardos' high rating on the human development index meant that the island was well placed to improve the situation of children. She first asked how the Barbadian Parliament participated in the implementation of the Convention. Had the Government considered acceding to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment? What provision had been made for the Government to take charge of the overall coordination of activities to implement the Convention? Why had the Child Care Board been responsible for preparing the report? What bodies were represented on the National Committee? Were there any plans to introduce a global strategy for implementation of the Convention?

18. Mr. FULCI commended the quality of the report which was comprehensive and self-critical. However, the data it contained were not sufficiently detailed and there was no assessment of the progress achieved and difficulties encountered in the implementation of relevant laws. He praised the Government of Barbados for calling on many sectors of civil society to collaborate in the drafting of the report. In the light of paragraphs 13 to 21 of the report, he asked what measures had been adopted or were planned to make the Convention better known in Barbados. Did human rights education, including children's rights, form part of the school curriculum?

19. Mrs. OUEDRAOGO said that there were gaps in the report. She inquired about the problems which had led to its late submission. How was the need to protect children against the adverse effects of the structural adjustment programme reflected in Barbados' new strategy to combat poverty? Had the Child Care Board been reorganized after ratification of the Convention in order to comply with its requirements? How did the Board coordinate implementation at local and national level? Had the National Plan of Action on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children achieved any results in respect of children's rights? Had information from the reports referred to in paragraph 12 been included in the initial report and had those reports been discussed beforehand?

20. Mrs. MOKHUANE endorsed her colleagues' comments about the high quality of the report, but since the Committee was aware that domestic legislation in Barbados was not keeping pace with economic and social changes, she wished to know how national laws were addressing the higher incidence of divorce, single parenthood and poverty. How were budgetary resources distributed at regional level? What constraints had there been on resource allocation? How had the spin-off from the structural adjustment programme benefited children? What programmes or activities were in place to improve the lot of children? Given the shortage of social workers in Barbados, what financial incentives or programmes existed to encourage adults and young people to take up social work as a profession?

The meeting was suspended at 11.55 a.m. and resumed at 12.05 p.m.

21. Mr. GRIFFITH (Barbados), responding to the question concerning Parliament's involvement in disseminating information on the rights of the child, pointed out that Barbados was a tiny country with good communications. The Minister of Social Transformation took a close interest in matters concerning the Convention and, in connection with Child Month activities, had given numerous radio and television interviews. There were 28 parliamentary constituencies, each branch of which had invited the Child Care Board and relevant non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to contribute their views on appropriate child-care activities. Parliament attached great importance to children's issues; not only were sessions of the House of Assembly devoted to them, but so were constituency meetings, so that children's issues and the impact of legal measures on children were discussed nationwide.

22. Replying to the question concerning the economic impact of the structural adjustment programme he said that the budget allocated to the Child Care Board had gradually diminished over the years from $10.5 million to $7.5 million, with the result that a number of programmes had slowed to a crawl, if not to a total halt. However, it had been increased in recent years by $1 million per year, bringing the figure for 1999-2000 to $12.5 million. The increase had enabled the Board to introduce new programmes, refurbish buildings, fill all vacant posts and even create new posts.

23. One major achievement was the 100 per cent increase in the foster-care allowance. Television broadcasts had been devoted to the subject of foster care, with the participation of both foster parents and foster children.

24. Ms. CRAWFORD (Barbados) said that the Child Care Board was a statutory body devoted to children's issues, which maintained close contact with the organizations represented on the National Committee for the Implementation of the Rights of the Child. It was composed of representatives of the judiciary, the trade unions and youth organizations, and provided a forum for interdisciplinary discussions.

25. It had taken 46 months to prepare the initial report. The responses of NGOs, the various ministries and the general public, although late in coming, had eventually been incorporated in a draft document, which had been widely distributed to ensure that everyone was aware of the Board's work. The document dealt inter alia with juvenile justice and children whose parents were infected with the HIV/AIDS virus or had died of AIDS. While HIV-infected children were usually cared for within the family, the Child Care Board intervened when necessary to provide appropriate care.

26. The Ministry of Social Transformation had formulated a special poverty alleviation programme which had been allocated a budget of $11 million in 1999, on the assumption that poverty reduction would benefit children as a whole.

27. In response to the question concerning the shortage of social workers, she said that the problem was one of availability. However, for the past four years the Cave Hill campus of the University of the West Indies, located in Barbados, had been offering a degree in social work. Originally designed for partially trained staff, it was currently open to others as well.

28. The CHAIRPERSON asked whether Barbados had any special incentives in place to encourage young people to become social workers.

29. Ms. CRAWFORD (Barbados) replied that, while there were no special incentives, there was ongoing activity involving annual visits to schools in order to encourage young people to take up the profession.

30. Miss MASON (Barbados), after congratulating Mrs. Mboi on her election, thanked the Committee for the warm welcome it had extended to her on her return, no longer as Chairperson of the Committee, but as a representative of her country which she wished to portray in a true and honest light.

31. In response to Mrs. Sardenberg's question, she said that Barbados had not ratified the Convention against Torture. The country was revisiting the various conventions it had not yet ratified - in exercise of its sovereign right - with a view to deciding for or against ratification and speeding up action on those it decided to ratify. She was not certain what the Government's final decision would be, but the delegation would raise the matter on its return home.

32. On the question whether the 1992 Plan of Action had been abandoned, and another concerning its medium-term impact on children's rights, she said that Barbados had attained the milestones set by the World Summit for Children, making the plan obsolete. The National Committee intended to draw up a new programme, for which purpose three subcommittees had been established to

examine separate issues. Barbadian legislation was almost entirely in conformity with the Convention on the Rights of the Child; indeed many of its provisions predated the Convention.

33. In reply to the question whether domestic legislation had kept pace with socio-economic developments and whether the laws governing divorce, custody, property and the family were continually monitored, she said that the authorities had realized in 1976 that the country was in an anomalous situation - albeit one considered quite normal in the Caribbean - where unmarried couples constituted 50 per cent of families. The Government had decided that the progeny of such households needed to be protected and had instituted for such couples, provided they had cohabited for at least five years, a legal category of "unions other than marriage". The rights of such children were further protected by the Status of Children Reform Act. In custody cases, the judge, on the advice of social workers, ruled on the basis of an objective examination of each parent's situation, according the utmost importance to reasonable access by the other parent. Also, under the Family Law Act, a divorce did not become absolute until all issues relating to minor offspring had been resolved to the satisfaction of the court.

34. Poverty alleviation was also given priority by the Ministry of Social Transformation, and was discussed daily on call-in radio programmes, in which the general public aired its views.

35. Concerning the measures taken to make the Convention on the Rights of the Child more widely known, she said that prior to the establishment of a monitoring committee in September 1998, some efforts had been made to that end, with UNICEF in an advocacy role. Many local and regional public meetings were held to discuss the Convention, and both UNICEF and the Child Care Board were instrumental in promoting children's rights. The Convention was given exposure by the media, and two colloquia on the rights of the child had been held, one in November 1998, the other in March 1999. In addition, human rights were taught in schools under the heading "Civics and citizenship".

36. Mr. GRIFFITH (Barbados), replying to the question concerning the Child Care Board's role as a focal point, said that it had a 12-member Board of Directors which included teachers and social workers and was directly answerable to the Ministry of Social Transformation, which in turn was legally responsible to the Cabinet. With the establishment of the Board, more energy was being invested in child-related activities. It was not a static body; some members were reappointed, while others departed. He himself had been its Chairman since 1994.

37. Ms. CRAWFORD (Barbados), replying to a question from Ms. Mokhuane, said that it was impractical for a small country like Barbados to undertake regional activities and that all the programmes were centralized. The Ministry of Social Transformation had a child-care budget, which was subsequently allocated to the Child Care Board, in accordance with each department's programmes and plan of action. The fact that the budget for child-related activities had risen from $38 million in 1995 to the current level of $68 million attested to the importance the authorities attached to children and the family.

38. The CHAIRPERSON invited the members of the Committee to raise additiona questions.

39. Mrs. KARP commended the Government of Barbados for having established the Committee on the Implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It would be useful to know whether that committee had undertaken to review national legislation to assess its conformity with both the letter and the spirit of the Convention. What portion of the budget was allocated to it work?

40. She felt that the Government's policy concerning pornography, which too into account photographs but not the communications media or the Internet, should be re-evaluated. In addition, judges in Barbados were expected to respect the wishes of children over the age of 16 in custody disputes; the Convention, however, called for decisions of that kind to be made in accordance not with a child's age but with his/her evolving capacities.

41. It would be useful to know whether the Barbados Government had a strategy for working with NGOs in the matter of child policy, and whether resources were allocated for that purpose. She also wondered whether approaches to parental counselling services incorporated ideas about childhoo that reflected the spirit of the Convention, in particular with regard to suc matters as abuse and incest.

42. The Child Care Board played a central advocacy role on behalf of children. But its name, which suggested the concept of protection, should perhaps be changed to reflect a child rights approach, and to convey the idea that it worked on behalf of all children, not just those with special needs.

43. Finally, it would be helpful to know whether the Government had considered the development of indicators in such areas as freedom of speech and the right to education, which would demonstrate the degree of success in implementing the terms of the Convention.

44. Mrs. MOKHUANE said that the report indicated that, in practice, a Barbadian child became an adult at the age of 16. It also suggested that a judge had discretion to determine whether a child was sufficiently mature to make his/her own decisions. In view of the shortage of professional social workers in Barbados, the question arose what assistance was provided to the judge in making such a determination. Furthermore, there was no question tha children aged seven were too young to assume criminal responsibility. At tha age, children tried to avoid punishment in order to please their parents, but had not yet developed a sense of right or wrong.

45. Mr. DOEK inquired whether the Child Care Board was empowered to investigate cases of child abuse and bring them to the attention of the courts.

46. Mrs. TIGERSTEDT-TAHTELA, noting the central role of the Child Care Board, inquired whether Barbados had no municipal bodies to handle matters o social welfare.

47. Mr. RABAH requested further information on Child Month, in particular whether the Convention was distributed to participants, both children and parents, and whether events designed to teach children their rights were included in the programme.

48. It would also be useful to know whether a child benefited from legal representation when appearing before the courts, and whether it was in fact the case that a child could not obtain legal or medical counselling without parental consent. The report indicated that a child over the age of 15 and under the age of 18 was allowed to work, but not at night or during school hours. What in fact were "school hours"? What measures were taken to implement the relevant legislation? Furthermore, did the minimum age for marriage apply both to girls and to boys? Finally, children under the age of 18 should not be sent to prison: the Government should consider alternative means of handling young people whose behaviour constituted a serious problem.

49. Mrs. OUEDRAOGO, observing that Child Month had been celebrated in Barbados since 1967, inquired whether the form and content of that event had changed since the ratification of the Convention, and to what extent the public participated. What, in the Government's view, was the impact of Child Month on the successful implementation of the Convention?

50. She also wished to know to what extent the report had been publicized, and what, the public reaction to it had been. Had it sparked any debate or discussion?

51. The report mentioned legislation that prohibited holders of liquor licences from selling to minors, but made no mention of other vendors or the use of alcohol in the home. What other laws were in place to prevent the use of alcohol by children, and what measures had been taken to implement them? Had the Government considered conducting an awareness and education campaign to discourage alcohol use by children?

52. Furthermore, the report was not clear about the age at which a child was permitted to work; clarification would be welcome. What measures were taken to prevent children from working during school hours? Finally, the Government should clearly establish the age at which a child was permitted to consult a lawyer.

53. Mrs. SARDENBERG said that she welcomed the establishment of a national programme of action for children. However, since it did not cover all the issues addressed by the Convention, the Government should consider the development of a broad national strategy. What stage had Barbados reached in the preparation of a budget that reflected the needs of children? Information was needed on the relationship between the Government and NGOs, and, in particular, on how the independence and impartiality of NGOs was protected.

54. She was aware that Barbadian society was resistant to the notion of the child as a subject of law; comments would be welcome regarding the role of the child in the family and in society. Did the Convention have an impact on that role?

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.

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COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

Twenty-first session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 535th MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Tuesday, 18 May 1999, at 3 p.m.

Chairperson: Mrs. MBOI

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CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS OF STATES PARTIES (continued)

Initial report of Barbados (continued)

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GE.99-42052 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS OF STATES PARTIES (agenda item 6) (continued)

Initial report of Barbados (coninued) (CRC/C/3/Add.45; HRI/CORE/1/Add.64/Rev.1; CRC/C/Q/BAR/1; written replies of the Barbadian Government to questions raised in the list of issues (document without a symbol distributed during the meeting, in English only))

1. At the invitation of the Chairperson, the members of the delegation of Barbados took places at the Committee table.

2. The CHAIRPERSON invited the members of the delegation to continue answering questions asked by members of the Committee.

3. Miss MASON (Barbados) explained that the age of 16 was symbolic in her country. On reaching that age, young people were able to marry, enter employment, conclude contracts and drive a vehicle. For that reason, they objected to being considered children by the judicial system, which explained the difficulties encountered in extending the application of the juvenile justice system to young people up to the age of 18. The question, however, still remained on the agenda. In any event, the fact that young people between the ages of 16 and 18 were ostensibly treated as adults did not mean that magistrates failed to take account of their maturity or lack thereof. It was true that persons of that age were to be found in prisons, but that was because no alternative type of accommodation was yet available. Meetings had been held, and would continue to be held, with a view to devising alternative solutions.

4. All accused persons under the age of 18 could receive the assistance of a probation officer, and all minors aged under 16 were entitled to legal aid. In addition, magistrates generally sought the advice of the social services before deciding to place a minor in detention. The minimum age for criminal responsibility had been raised from 7 to 11 by the Penal Reform Act, which had come into force at the end of 1998.

5. She was glad to be able to report that child labour was not a problem in Barbados. In a country of small communities, where everyone knew everyone else and where the trade unions were very strict, no child aged under 16 could find employment. Minors aged between 16 and 18 who did work were generally engaged in apprenticeship schemes or worked outside school hours. The age of consent to marriage was set at 16 for both men and women, but it was nowadays rare today for anyone to get married so early. On the subject of alcohol consumption, she said that it was obviously difficult to control what happened in unlicensed premises or in private homes, but progress had been achieved as a result of the setting-up of the National Association against Substance Abuse and the steps taken to increase police vigilance. Penalties for unlicensed sale of liquor had been increased and there were ongoing campaigns, in particular on television, to publicize the dangers of alcohol.

6. Mr. GRIFFITH (Barbados) said that civil society could make recommendations on policy-making. There were NGOs participating in the work of the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Social Transformation. State

subsidies were granted to a number of NGOs, and also to the Child Care Board and certain establishments for disabled persons. Those establishments were required to submit reports every year stating how the funds allocated to them had been spent. With regard to the dissemination of the Convention, he explained that the saying "A child should be seen but not heard" was no longer true in Barbados. Efforts to popularize children's rights were being made both by the Child Care Board and by NGOs, the education system and religious groups. A State-supported programme introduced seven years earlier was yielding good results. The Child Care Board was to be merged with the Welfare Department in the interests of greater efficiency. For the duties of the Board, which was playing an increasingly important role, he referred members to the foreword to the initial report (CRC/C/3/Add.45), adding that the Board was also empowered to make recommendations for new laws and to bring charges in child abuse cases where the parents failed to do so.

7. Ms. CRAWFORD (Barbados) said that Child Month was held on a nationwide scale in order to focus attention on the rights of the child. Discussions organized as part of the event were conducted by the children themselves and were open to all. Child participation had made great strides in Barbados over the past few years. Thus, a Youth Parliament had been created. Barbados had exceeded the Initiative 20/20 targets in that more than 20 per cent of the State budget was now allocated to social services. Progress still remained to be made with respect to the collection of disaggregated data, but the Statistics Department was currently working on that problem.

8. Miss MASON (Barbados) said that the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child was now the responsibility of the Ministry of Social Transformation, a new ministry established after the elections of January 1999. The national legislation was, on the whole, in conformity with the Convention, but the National Committee on the implementation of the Convention would use the list of issues as a basis for identifying provisions that needed amendment. For example, protection against pornography on the Internet was an issue not yet covered by legislation and should be brought under control.

9. The CHAIRPERSON invited members of the Committee wishing to do so to address additional questions to the Barbadian delegation.

10. Mrs. EL GUINDI asked whether the necessary steps were being taken to publicize and explain the provisions of the Convention to minors who objected to being regarded as children by the judicial system.

11. Mrs. OUEDRAOGO stressed her awareness of the traditional place of the child in Barbadian society, and asked what the public at large thought of article 12 of the Convention and what steps were being taken to change people's attitudes. To what extent did disabled persons have access to employment, education and public services? And how was their integration in society being facilitated?

12. Mrs. MOKHUANE said she regretted that the report did not include a clear list of the existing legal provisions designed to protect disabled persons and to facilitate their daily life. She also regretted that the report failed to mention the protection of persons with a different sexual orientation, and

requested further information on those two points. Further, she asked whether the problem of school violence existed in Barbados and, if so, how the authorities were addressing the introduction of drugs and weapons into educational establishments.

13. Mr. RABAH asked for information about any court cases involving the implementation of article 3 of the Convention.

14. Mrs. KARP said she had heard that the Barbadian Government was intending to bring back the death penalty at age 16. She hoped the delegation would be able to refute that report She further inquired to what extent magistrates and professionals working with children took account of the views of the child and how the Government planned to deal with the very worrying problem of corporal punishment, which was still authorized in schools, residential child centres and the family.

15. Mr. DOEK asked what criteria were used for granting permanent resident status in Barbados. He found it surprising that children who did not have Barbadian nationality were not entitled, like other children, to education free of charge. While noting that children aged under 16 were theoretically entitled to legal aid, he wondered what the situation was in practice. Was a legal representative appointed automatically and, if so, by what authority? Did the provisions in question apply only in criminal cases or in civil cases as well? Lastly, he inquired whether Barbadian law provided explicitly for the possibility of a child's views being heard in judicial proceedings concerning him/her and, if so, whether that possibility was connected with the child's age or maturity.

16. Mrs. KARP regarded it as discriminatory that children aged 16 to 18 were not entitled, like younger children, to the assistance of a legal representative in judicial proceedings, and requested the delegation to provide explanations in that respect.

17. The CHAIRPERSON said she would suspend the meeting for a few minutes in order to enable the Barbadian delegation to prepare its replies to the additional questions asked by members of the Committee.

The meeting was suspended at 3.55 p.m. and resumed at 4 p.m.

18. Mr. GRIFFITH (Barbados) said that the campaign to inform and mobilize the public so that the voices and views of children might be better heard in Barbadian society was continuing, and the results achieved were already highly satisfactory. There was not yet any specific law to protect disabled persons from all forms of discrimination but the Government had included that concern in its programme of work and all recent buildings were equipped with appropriate facilities. A national organization for the disabled had been established and disabled people were playing a full part in public life at all levels.

19. There was also no legislation specifically designed to protect persons with different sexual preferences, but attitudes in that respect had changed considerably and no child was discriminated against because of his/her sexual

orientation. Lastly, the Barbadian authorities, which considered corporal punishment to be a harmful and counter-productive practice, were encouraging parents to use other methods of education and discipline and to establish an ongoing dialogue with their children from a very early age. Day nurseries and schools were strongly discouraged from having recourse to corporal punishment.

20. Ms. CRAWFORD (Barbados), reverting to the question of disabled persons, said that a special team had been set up within the Government to formulate policies for the disabled and to ensure that the necessary reforms were undertaken. Thus, all disabled persons were invited to make themselves known to the authorities, which were anxious to establish close collaboration with them and to offer them the best possible guidance in their daily activities.

21. The Government was fully aware of the problem of violence among young people. The Ministry of Education and a number of NGOs had drawn up programmes for the peaceful resolution of conflicts fo all schools and pre-school establishments, and children in difficulty were receiving psychological assistance adapted to their needs.

22. Miss MASON (Barbados) said that she wished to dispel any misunderstanding concerning the protection, particularly of a legal nature, available to children aged 16 to 18. From the age of 16, children could make their voice heard in any judicial proceedings concerning them. However, while the best interests of the child was the principle by which judges were guided in all their decisions, the concept was not yet very widespread in Barbadian legislation and there was probably room for reform in that respect. Still, the presence of a lawyer at the child's side was obligatory in all civil or criminal proceedings involving a minor. Contrary to certain allegations, the Barbadian authorities had no intention whatever of restoring the death penalty for persons under 18 years of age.

23. The country's education system was of excellent quality and because schooling was free, some parents living in other islands of the Caribbean were sending their children to school in Barbados. In order to enter primary school a child had, in theory, to be in possession of the "green card", where compulsory vaccinations were also entered, but it was not unusual for children without the card to complete all their schooling in Barbados. Permanent residence status was granted to persons who had not been born in Barbados, were not Barbadian citizens by filiation and had not been naturalized if they had resided in the country for at least seven years and did not have a criminal record.

24. Mrs. KARP said that, in her view, any campaign to publicize the harmful effects of corporal punishment was doomed to failure in the absence of laws expressly prohibiting the practice.

25. With regard to the right of the child to express his/her views and to have them taken into consideration, she asked whether there was a complaints mechanism to which children who believed their rights to have been violated could have recourse and whether the authorities had envisaged establishing the office of "children's ombudsman". On the subject of civil rights, she asked whether children were entitled to set up their own organizations.

26. Mrs. OUEDRAOGO asked what arrangements had been made pursuant to article 7 of the Convention to ensure that no child found himself in a situation of statelessness. Could a child keep Barbadian citizenship even when the parents had lost it? She also inquired what was the status of a child if his/her birth had not been declared by the parents within the 28-day period allowed for this purpose.

27. While noting that the right to freedom of association and peaceful assembly (Convention, art. 15) was guaranteed by the Barbadian Constitution, she pointed out that the right of children in that field was not mentioned specifically. Was the exercise of that right also guaranteed to children and young people? What was the situation with regard to the protection of the child's privacy (ibid., art. 16), which likewise was not specifically provided for by law? In that connection, it was stated in paragraph 67 of the report that, given the present climate of violence in schools, consideration was being given to the possibility of instituting regulations relating to the searching of students and any bags they carried. Had students participated in the debate on that subject? And had the protection of the children's privacy been taken into account in the decisions taken?

28. Referring to the right not to be subjected to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment (Convention, art. 37), she asked how the relevant national laws were being enforced. It was a matter of concern, in that respect, to read in the report that corporal punishment could be administered in schools, to a reasonably necessary extent, as part of the disciplinary procedure. What happened when the reasonable limits - which were difficult to establish - were exceeded by teachers? Lastly, were the Barbadian authorities planning, as part of the reform process, to end the practice of whipping in prisons?

29. Mr. GRIFFITH (Barbados) said that the Government would continue to work energetically towards the abolition of corporal punishment, which, however, was still advocated as an educational method by some of the country's religious authorities.

30. Miss MASON (Barbados) said that the Ministry of Education had instituted measures which enabled children to lodge complaints in the event of conflicts at school, either between students or with teaching staff. Replying to the question about the establishment of a children's ombudsman, she said that such a step would not be economically justified because the general ombudsman was well able to deal with specific problems involving children. Children below the age of 18 were entitled to set up associations, although such associations were not legally recognized. There were no cases of statelessness in Barbados and it was impossible to lose Barbadian citizenship.

31. On the subject of registration of births, she confirmed that any parent failing to abide by the time limit of 28 days set for the purpose was punishable by a fine. However, no case involving a problem of that kind had ever arisen in Barbados. In connection with the protection of children from the harmful effects of new technologies and video games, she said that the Act of 1990 would be amended to take account of the new situation in that field.

A child below the age of 16 was not entitled in principle to acquire certain types of video cassettes, but the law obviously did not empower the police to check what children did at home.

32. Ms. CRAWFORD (Barbados) said that the Education Act would also be amended to ensure the protection of all children at school. Campaigns were under way in order to draw public attention to various forms of violence and to the harmful effects of corporal punishment.

33. Miss MASON (Barbados) said that whipping was indeed authorized as a disciplinary method in prisons, but explained that, outside that specific instance, it was considered to be a form of treatment that should be avoided.

34. The CHAIRPERSON thanked the Barbadian delegation for its replies to the additional questions from members of the Committee concerning the first three sections of the list of issues, and invited members to ask additional questions concerning the sections on civil rights and freedoms and on family environment and alternative care.

35. Mr. DOEK asked for more detailed information on the system for protecting children subjected to ill-treatment, and in particular on the means of submitting complaints available to the children themselves. In that connection, he asked whether the Family Law Court, whose establishment had been envisaged at the time of writing of the report, had been set up. While welcoming the satisfactory operation of the family placement system, he wondered whether the foster families always observed the best interests of the child. Were there cases where foster families accepted a child purely for the purpose of making money? He would also appreciate more information about the Government's system of surveillance of placement of children in foster families.

36. Mrs. KARP asked whether steps were taken to ensure that children were not afraid to lodge a complaint. It might perhaps be desirable to establish the Office of children's ombudsman, even if such a step was not economically justified. She inquired whether Barbados intended to ratify the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in respect of Intercountry Adoption, and whether there was an open adoption system enabling children to be in touch with their biological family and their adoptive family at the same time. Lastly, was the Government planning to organize training courses for staff working with children who had been subjected to violence in the family?

37. Mrs. OUEDRAOGO asked what were the respective roles of the parents in bringing up children. In view of the large number of single-parent families, especially those headed by a woman, she wished to know what measures were being taken or planned in order to help such families to bring up their children. She also inquired whether legal steps were taken to protect children of common-law marriages or to guarantee the right of the child to remain in touch with his/her father and mother when they were separated or divorced. She would also appreciate details of the financial support which the Government granted to families in difficulties and, in particular, to children whose father could not afford to pay maintenance to the mother

because of unemployment or problems connected with structural adjustment measures. She asked to be informed of the number of divorces in Barbados and of the specific situation of adolescents between 14 and 18 (emotional and social problems, etc.).

38. Lastly, she asked whether the Government was planning to take, or had taken, steps to prevent informally-adopted children from being subjected to various forms of exploitation and whether such adoption could be invalidated at the request of the child if he/she was not being well treated within the adopted family.

39. Mrs. MOKHUANE said that the parts of the report relating to family environment and alternative care lacked precision. It would be useful to have more information on the situation of teenage mothers and on measures taken by the Government to encourage girls to avoid early motherhood. How could such young women acquire a higher level of education?

40. The CHAIRPERSON invited the Barbadian delegation to answer the additional questions asked by members of the Committee.

41. Mr. GRIFFITH (Barbados) said that the ending of compulsory education at age 16 did not mean that a child's studies had to stop at that age. Any teenage mother wishing to do so could, therefore, continue her secondary education, or even go on to higher education, after the birth of her child. However, the prevention of early pregnancies was the subject of special attention within the framework of cooperation between the public authorities and NGOs. In particular, certain NGOs subsidized by the Government were helping nurses in the public health system who gave family education classes in primary schools. It should be noted that those classes took the place of sex education in an integrated setting, taking into consideration the emotional as well as the physiological development of the child, and were designed to develop the children's sense of responsibility well before the age of puberty. There also existed an adolescent parenting programme, which, in addition to matters of child care as such, tackled such topics as HIV/AIDS, child abuse and the empowerment of women. Young parents were also made aware of the importance of education and received assistance in seeking jobs. Statistics showing a steady decrease in the number of children born to teenage mothers over the past 20 years testified to the success of the measures taken in the field of family education.

42. With regard to the increase in the number of single-parent families and the erosion of the expanded family, he remarked that those were trends which might be deplored by some but society must adapt itself to them. In addition to the 14 day-care centres administered by the Child-Care Board, 67 privately-run centres had been opened for the children of working parents. The distribution of roles within the family also formed the subject of an awareness-raising campaign targeted at men. The broadcasting of a very popular televised series entitled "Men talk" and the setting-up of a National Men's Forum within the Ministry of Social Transformation were among the steps taken to change attitudes in that area. Lastly, the Ministry's welfare services not only provided families in difficulties with financial aid, but also operated training, placement and vocational guidance programmes.

43. With regard to the social status of children who had spent many years in residential centres, he said that the Child-Care Board was doing its best to ensure their gradual integration, particularly through vocational training courses in the private sector. If the children could not be placed with relatives or a foster family, they were housed in apartments rented by the Board until they had found work and become self-supporting. On reaching their majority, children who had been placed in care continued to be covered by a follow-up system.

44. Ms. CRAWFORD (Barbados) said that, since 1996, only four Barbadian children had been adopted by foreign parents. Since they had remained in the Caribbean region, the follow-up of their situation raised no particular difficulties. As for placement in a foster family, the monitoring method employed was the following: a visit within the month following the placement, followed by at least one monthly visit during the first six months and thereafter a visit every six weeks or two months depending on whether the child was aged under or over 5. For all children placed in a foster family for a period greater than two years, visits took place at the rate of one every three months. On receiving a complaint from or concerning a child, the child protection officer immediately went to the foster family, unless he or she considered that to be unnecessary. The Child-Care Board tried to involve other persons in monitoring the situation of children in care in order to prevent any possible collusion between the placement officer and the foster family. Any diversion of the allowance to the foster family was unlikely in view of the twofold control exercised by child welfare officers and by the community. Two subcommittees of the Board, namely, the Children's Committee and the Adoption and Placement Committee, met once a month to consider the problems experienced by children. Any complaint addressed to the Board gave rise to a preliminary inquiry. If the alleged facts were confirmed, the Board could ask the court to issue a "place of safety" order or to make the child a ward of court. As a result of the public education programme on child abuse, the representatives of all professions concerned, particularly police officers, social workers and nurses, were showing a genuine willingness to contribute to efforts to combat that problem. Children themselves were invited to report cases of ill-treatment and did not hesitate to contact the Board. In giving assistance to child victims of abuse, the Board employed the services of a psychologist, a child psychiatrist and social workers trained, in particular, in play therapy techniques. In the event of legal proceedings, the national law normally provided for the holding of a confrontation between the accused and the victim, but everything was done to minimize the trauma to the child. Since the child was part of a family, all possibilities of family rehabilitation had to be taken into consideration. In that context, she thought that the suggestion for the establishment of a children's desk in the ombudsman's office deserved consideration; the proposal would be duly brought to the knowledge of her country's authorities.

45. Turning to the problems experienced by women who could not recover the maintenance money due to them, she said that, as well as providing such women with financial help, the Welfare Department took steps to give them appropriate assistance in kind (free uniforms and textbooks, medical care or transport) so that the children of such families might not be disadvantaged as compared with others.

46. On the question of adoption, she stressed that her Government did not encourage the informal system referred to in paragraph 105 of the report; the national law in that sphere was sufficiently clear. Children taken in by friends or family members enjoyed the same rights as adopted children.

47. Miss MASON (Barbados), replying to questions asked about the status of the Convention, said that in Barbados the ratification of an international instrument did not automatically make that instrument operational in domestic law; enabling legislation to that effect must be voted by Parliament. That did not, however, preclude judicial officers from basing their decisions on the articles of the Convention. Barbados did not have a family court; matters relating to divorce, custody, etc. came within the purview of the Family Division of the High Court, and cases involving minors were dealt with by the Juvenile Court.

48. As to children born out of wedlock, the Status of Children Reform Act of 1979 granted them exactly the same rights as other children. Lastly, in the event of non-compliance with visiting rights by the custodial parent, the injured parent could apply to the court in order to secure exercise of that right.

49. The CHAIRPERSON thanked the Barbadian delegation for its replies. The Committee would resume consideration of its initial report at the next meeting.

The meeting rose at 6.10 p.m.

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Twenty-first session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 536th MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Wednesday, 19 May 1999, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Mrs. MBOI

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Initial report of Barbados (continued)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS OF STATES PARTIES (agenda item 6) (continued)

Initial report of Barbados (continued) (CRC/C/3/Add.45; HRI/CORE/1/Add.64/Rev.1; CRC/C/Q/BAR/1)

1. The CHAIRPERSON asked the delegation of Barbados to respond to the question raised by Mrs. Mokhuane at the previous meeting concerning what was considered to be "corporal punishment permitted in a reasonable degree".

2. Miss MASON said that her delegation recognized that corporal punishment could be detrimental to a child's physical and psychological health and development. However, the current law in Barbados under the Prevention of Cruelty to Children Act still referred to "moderate chastisement" - a somewhat subjective concept - as a method of punishment and discipline. A number of cases had been brought before the courts and in most of them it had been decided that the punishment had been so excessive as to constitute physical abuse. However, in other cases it had been decided that if, for example, the child's skin had not been broken or he or she had been only moderately bruised, that constituted moderate chastisement. Those people in the community who did not believe in corporal punishment, including the National Committee for Monitoring the Rights of the Child, were working on the issue.

3. The CHAIRPERSON said that information was needed on not only the physical impact of corporal punishment, but its psychological and emotional impact. She invited the members of the Committee to ask follow-up questions on family environment and alternative care and on basic health and welfare.

4. Mr. FULCI, noting that Mrs. Ouedraogo had already requested information on adoption, asked Mr. Griffith to elaborate on that subject. According to the country report, domestic and intercountry adoption were governed by the Adoption Act of 1981 and the Adoption Regulations of 1986. However, no separate data were given for each type of adoption. Barbados was not a party to the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption of 1993: was the Government planning to ratify it? Moreover, statistics for the Caribbean region suggested that boys were more frequently abandoned in infancy and childhood than girls: was there a reason for that?

5. Regarding abuse and neglect of children, NGO sources confirmed that violence against women and children was a continuing social problem, both in Barbados and worldwide. Women's rights groups had reported that the number of known incidents of sexual assault, domestic violence and rape was on the increase, despite the continued reluctance of many victims to report them. According to UNICEF, the number of abandoned children in residential care in the eastern Caribbean area had also risen. However, it was difficult to quantify the extent of child abuse because of a lack of accurate records. In the light of the information given in paragraphs 116 to 123 of the report, had any comprehensive research been conducted or planned on the mistreatment of children within and outside the family? Were any other measures being taken

or envisaged, such as information campaigns to help prevent mistreatment, including sexual abuse, and to promote the treatment and rehabilitation of victims?

6. Regarding basic health and welfare, he asked the delegation to provide updated information on the percentage of children who were breastfed, since UNICEF's State of the World's Children 1998 report had given no data on breastfeeding in Barbados.

7. The CHAIRPERSON pointed out that Mr. Fulci's questions regarding the Hague Convention and raising public awareness of child abuse had already been answered at the previous day's meeting.

8. Mrs. OUEDRAOGO said that the country report indicated that young girls were subjected to violence, sexual abuse and rape in the family and even at school. What measures were being taken to give them better protection against abuse, including at school? The report also referred to difficulties encountered by the Child Care Board in dealing with cases of abuse and neglect, for example, the refusal of the child's family to cooperate with the Board. Other problems were the length of the judicial process and the lack of cooperation among the various services concerned. What measures were being taken by the Government to improve the quality of services and to induce families to cooperate?

9. Regarding health and welfare, most nurseries were privately run and were monitored by the Child Care Board. However, the monitoring was inadequate since it was done by one person alone. What sanctions were in place or envisaged for non-observance of the minimum rules and norms in day-care institutions? Had more staff been recruited or had other action been taken to improve the service?

10. The report said that there was no homelessness problem in Barbados: was that still the case? Were there any homeless children? Since poverty existed, cases of homelessness might also occur. Had a study of the issue been conducted?

11. Mrs. KARP, referring to Miss Mason's explanation of what constituted moderate chastisement and what constituted abuse, said that if courts found that, as long as the child's bones were not broken, moderate chastisement rather than abuse had taken place, that would impede efforts to create an atmosphere of non-violence. Had a study been conducted into the possible connection between the use of corporal punishment to discipline children and subsequent violent behaviour by those children? The transition from a culture that allowed corporal punishment to a culture that recognized that corporal punishment only led to increased violence was a difficult one. However, a number of countries had made such a transition and Barbados could learn from their experience in order to introduce alternative methods of discipline without parents and teachers feeling that they had lost control over children.

12. She requested more information about the misbehaviour of girls which was reported to probation officers. Such misbehaviour apparently included rudeness to parents and coming home late; however, if it was reported to a

probation officer, it was presumably regarded as an offence. That suggested that girls were not always recognized as having rights. Had that issue been discussed and, if so, what conclusions had been drawn?

13. Regarding child abuse within the home, the issue of battered women should be raised, since children who grew up in a home where violence was used against women tended to use violence against their own children. She was aware that Barbados had legislation providing for offenders to leave home, but had a comprehensive policy been developed on dealing with cases of domestic violence in police stations and courts? Were women encouraged to complain and were complaints followed up? Were offenders brought to trial?

14. Although the problem of HIV and AIDS was not yet a serious one in Barbados, had comprehensive policies been formulated in that regard, including how to involve children in an education campaign on the subject? How were children with AIDS treated in the education system? What measures were being taken to cope with a possible increase in the number of children orphaned as a result of their parents dying of AIDS? Many children under 16 needed to consult doctors or psychologists on adolescent health problems without their parents' consent: were free facilities available for that purpose? The existing reproductive health curriculum needed to be expanded to cover other problems such as drugs, violence and inter-relationships between children.

15. She reiterated the need to formalize policy relating to disabled children and to increase the number of professionals who specialized in dealing with them, since the shortage of such professionals resulted in many disabled children leaving school at 16 without the knowledge or skills necessary for life.

16. Mrs. MOKHUANE welcomed the action taken to address the health problems of children aged 0 to 5 and the problem of malnourishment, although obesity and hypertension were still increasing. Children tended to acquire the eating habits of their parents and that could lead to problems later in life. Did Barbados have a comprehensive policy on nutrition and how did it filter down to the population at large?

17. The successes of the Family Life Development programme had been mentioned but had it encountered any difficulties? Although HIV and AIDS did not currently pose a significant problem in Barbados, had policies been planned to deal with that issue in the future, for example, the question of children who might become orphans through the death of their parents from AIDS? Also, while the number of teenage pregnancies had declined, the number of abortions had increased, suggesting that abortion was being used as a method of contraception. How was that question being addressed? On the subject of reproductive health, progress had been made in teaching people about responsible sexual behaviour, but was the emotional aspect of sex also covered?

18. Access to early childhood care was not universal and appeared to depend on parents' ability to pay for it. What was the Government's policy in that area? The information regarding disabled people seemed to suggest that integration policies were not comprehensive enough and she requested more

information about how they worked and what code of standards was used. The statistics on suicide and parasuicide suggested that girls were affected more than boys. Had a study been conducted of the problems leading to suicide and how to alleviate them? They were being addressed to some extent in the Family Life Development programme; however, more substantial information was required.

19. Mr. RABAH asked if there was a system for coordination between the public and private sectors. Were any centres other than St. Andrew's Children's Centre and the Evalina Smith Children's Ward working with the Ministry of Health and what degree of success had they achieved in protecting children from disease? In 1993, Barbados had accepted UNICEF's challenge to make hospitals more baby-friendly; what progress had been made since then in meeting that challenge? Could more details and, if possible, figures be given on nutrition and child health? What projects were planned for the future with regard to child care and social security for children in Barbados?

20. Mr. DOEK, referring to paragraph 73 of the report, asked if there was any difference between the custody arrangements for children of married and unmarried couples. Had a family reunification policy been developed for children who had been placed outside the parental home for a certain period of time?

21. Mrs. EL GUINDI asked what the infant and maternal mortality rates were and what percentages of disabled children were male and female. What type of monitoring system was used to verify those percentages?

22. Mrs. MOKHUANE said that, although statistics on cases of substance abuse, suicide and parasuicide had been provided, no surveys seemed to have been conducted to provide a broad picture of how those problems affected the community. Were any such surveys under way or planned for the future?

23. Mr. GRIFFITH (Barbados) said that, in 1998, the population of Barbados had been 266,900, the birth rate 13.6 per cent and the population growth rate 0.6 per cent per annum, with infant mortality down to 7.8 per 1,000 live births and maternal mortality negligible. More was spent on health and education than on any other sector; 193.8 million dollars had been allocated to health out of a total budget of 1.9 billion dollars. In effect, there was a free national health service backed up by a good network of private health providers.

24. It was impossible to know for certain whether abortion was used as a method of contraception. Every effort was made to offer comprehensive reproductive health counselling to anyone seeking it and termination of pregnancy was governed by very stringent regulations: at least one doctor's certificate was required and after the first three months, the operation had to be performed in a hospital. Furthermore, the Family Life Education Programme provided guidance in schools and on radio and television. Pregnant women and mothers were automatically referred to community follow-up care. The green card was a record of a child's birth and immunization and gave entitlement to free dental care.

25. He said that under a comprehensive, albeit unwritten, education and protection policy to deal with HIV infection and AIDS, all health practitioners and even teachers had to follow safety procedures at all times. HIV-positive children received the same education as other young people and their anonymity was protected in order to avoid discrimination. The Government had established the National Advisory Committee on AIDS, while the AIDS Society of Barbados, a non-governmental organization, received government support.

26. Children under 16 were allowed access to psychological services, and every secondary school had a guidance and counselling department staffed by trained officers who observed strict confidentiality and could independently refer cases to other agencies. In addition, a number of schools had established peer counselling groups. The Youth Advocacy Movement comprised groups of young persons trained to deal with adolescent development and reproductive health and rights issues. It was hoped that such groups could be set up in every school, as it was recognized that young people tended to listen to the advice of their peers. Song and dance were used to get the message across and youth groups went into depressed areas to try to work "on the block" with young people who would otherwise shun counselling.

27. There were no street children in Barbados. If a mother and her children were evicted from their home, the social services acted fast to find emergency housing. The Juvenile Liaison Scheme (a special unit of police officers trained as social workers) and the Child Care Board likewise intervened to provide assistance.

28. Turning to the question of why boys were more frequently abandoned than girls, he explained that one reason was that it was widely believed that adolescent boys were difficult and troublesome, and so prospective adoptive parents preferred girls. Some welcome changes in attitude had been achieved by an information drive and advocacy.

29. He pointed out that the Child Care Board's statistics on child abuse could record only reported cases and he believed that for every reported case, five might go unreported. In 1998 there had been 1,132 referrals. Since no specific study on the subject had yet been conducted, postgraduate sociology students were being encouraged to undertake that work.

30. Replying to the question about breastfeeding, he said that the Ministry of Health had been working on a breastfeeding promotion programme and a national survey providing up-to-date information was due to be published in the near future. The Queen Elizabeth Hospital had received the Baby-Friendly Hospital Award in January 1999. The breastfeeding initiative covered the first six months of a child's life and community nurses encouraged mothers to breastfeed for as long as possible. A number of private or government-run day-care centres had been established to assist nursing working mothers. Unfortunately, industrial companies had not yet set up crèches on their premises, but they were being urged to do so.

31. If children were orphaned by AIDS, the Child Care Board took immediate action and efforts focused on finding foster parents, preferably within the extended family, and on keeping the child at school.

32. Ms. CRAWFORD acknowledged that more effort needed to be done to improve the quality and collection of data on substance abuse and suicide. The National Monitoring Committee had made research in that area one of its priorities. In addition, the existance of a research and coordination section in the new Ministry of Social Transformation would make it easier to address causes of suicide. She did not have any statistics on the percentage of disabled children in the population, but the relevant data were being collected.

33. The purpose of visits carried out during adoption and foster care reviews was to monitor the welfare, health, conduct and schooling of the child. From the outset, therefore, the authorities had a good idea of whether children should be reunited with their families or required permanent placement. As families could foster with a view to adoption, the child was offered more stability in the course of the adoption process. In the event of short-term placement, the Child Care Board worked with the family and tried to secure reunification, but sometimes separation proved necessary.

34. The Evalina Smith Ward and St. Andrew's Centre catered for severely disabled children and young people. Disabled children could remain in school until they were 19. From the age of 16, they could attend the pre-vocational centre where they learned life skills. Children with disabilities could also go to normal schools and universities.

35. In reply to the question about problems encountered in early childhood programmes, she said that the number of staff monitoring that system had been increased from one to three. One was a pre-school educator, the other two were social workers. There was indeed a minimum set of standards for day-care facilities, which were inspected by the Ministry of Education, the Fire Department and the Child Care Board. Registration was on an annual basis and strict medical and licensing requirements had to be met, after which there was ongoing monitoring. In addition to private day-care centres, the Government had set up more nurseries attached to schools, for over 3-year-olds. A parent volunteer system had been introduced, whereby parents were trained to help with the general running of such facilities.

36. Referring to measures to protect children who had been sexually abused, she said that the principal aim was to reduce the child's trauma. A Child Care Board representative, sometimes accompanied by a police officer, interviewed the victim who would then be taken to a doctor. A safety order would be issued if necessary. It had been found that families were often willing to assist, thereby obviating the need for institutional care. However, if placement proved to be necessary, the child was assessed and counselled by a psychologist and a psychiatrist. A child abuse project had been launched in two schools to alert children to inappropriate behaviour, empower them to say "no" and advise them what to do in the event of indecent assault.

37. Miss MASON (Barbados) said that she wished to clarify her remarks of the previous day. Under the Family Law Act of 1976, children born from consensual unions that had lasted at least five years were entitled to the same considerations as those born from marital unions. The Status of Children

Reform Act had subsequently been passed to prohibit the stigmatization of children born out of wedlock. All matters affecting children born in or out of wedlock were handled in a manner that involved both parents; that included custody issues.

38. Turning to the matter of violence in the home, she said that when a case of child abuse was brought to the attention of the courts, the parents, and the mother in particular, were called in to provide information about the child. Efforts were sometimes made to settle such problems out of court, since mothers were often unwilling to give evidence. Some Barbados judges dismissed such cases; most, however, proceeded, considering the mother as a hostile witness. Dismissal undoubtedly resulted in loss of self-esteem for a child. In any event, the courts sought to further the child's best interests; for instance, consideration was given to whether or not the perpetrator of abuse was the sole breadwinner. Both the Child Care Board and the courts endeavoured to obtain the testimony of the child. Unfortunately, despite the fact that cases involving children were supposed to be handled expeditiously, the Barbados justice system worked slowly: an investigation had to be conducted and medical evidence presented.

39. The Board of Women's Affairs had established a comprehensive programme to deal with domestic abuse; it frequently conducted seminars, workshops and surveys, and sponsored radio and television broadcasts regarding violence in the home. Its efforts had resulted in the promulgation of the Domestic Violence (Protection Orders) Act 1992. Under the act, a person wishing to enter a complaint of domestic abuse could approach the courts directly, without first visiting a police station. Within two days, the parties involved were summoned. There followed a period of six weeks during which the parties were expected to receive counselling. If either party refused to participate in counselling, he/she would be served a court order and become liable to imprisonment. In addition, both the Child Care Board and the Welfare Department could institute proceedings, at the request of the child or of any other individual. It was therefore no longer necessary to contact the police, who had formerly been an obstacle to justice in cases of domestic violence.

40. In many jurisdictions, forms of misconduct such as truancy or running away from home were considered statutory offences, and could result in court proceedings. There were no street children in Barbados. Runaways who did not return home voluntarily might face police charges, but only if there was a persistent pattern of misconduct. The social welfare agencies, for their part, always returned children to their homes.

41. Mrs. KARP asked whether counselling was available to children who did not attend school. She wondered whether a system of protection orders was sufficiently stringent to deal with the problem of domestic violence, which was, after all, a criminal offence. Were there provisions for the punishment of offenders?

42. Miss MASON (Barbados) said that the charge against the perpetrator of the violent act constituted part of the complaint.

43. The CHAIRPERSON invited the members of the Committee to raise additional questions regarding education, leisure and cultural activities and special protection measures.

44. Mrs. KARP asked whether any effort had been made to study the quality of education in the various parts of the school system, government or private, and in particular to prevent children from dropping out of school.

45. According to a survey conducted by the World Bank in 1995, 50 per cent of children in rural schools, and 30 per cent of children in urban schools, did not have basic textbooks. Furthermore, schools suffered from a shortage of libraries. In view of a child's right to education and information, what measures was the Government taking to remedy those deficiencies? She also wished to know what measures, if any, had been taken to combat drug use and violence in schools.

46. The report offered little information about compliance with articles 30 and 40 of the Convention. It would be useful to know whether the disciplinary use of flogging in prison was monitored, and whether a report of the circumstances was required. Children were currently detained in a separate ward of the adult prison. Had the Government envisaged alternative detention and rehabilitation measures?

47. Mrs. TIGERSTEDT-TÄHTELÄ said that the Barbados Government evidently accorded high priority to social services and welfare. From a macroeconomic standpoint, it would be helpful to know how the Government financed the budget. What was the taxation system, and was it effective? She would be interested to know how the globalization of the world economy had affected Barbados. Had the Government found ways of benefiting from that phenomenon, for instance by taxing foreign companies? What kinds of grants and funds were received from the international community and what policies had the Government instituted to alleviate poverty?

48. Mrs. OUEDRAOGO inquired how the system of monitoring school attendance was structured, how many monitors there were, and whether they worked by zone or by school. To what extent was education free? What expenses were paid by parents, and - in view of the fact that scholarships were disbursed only to secondary school students - what measures were taken to assist parents of primary schoolchildren who were unable to pay? Was the number of scholarships for secondary schoolchildren sufficient? Were other resources available?

49. The Sexual Offences Act, 1992-93, made sexual intercourse with a child under the age of 14 a criminal offence; but the minimum legal age of consent was 16. What happened when a child who fell between those two ages was sexually abused? Allowing a person who had sexual intercourse with a young person to claim unawareness of his or her age vitiated the law. Since most children now looked older than their age, were not all consequently in danger? What measures were envisaged to provide better protection from sexual abuse?

50. Mrs. KARP inquired how many children were imprisoned in Barbados, and what measures were taken to provide the minimum conditions necessary for their welfare.

51. Regrettably, the report made no mention of leisure, play or cultural activities.

52. Mr. RABAH asked how many young people were committed to the Government Industrial School rather than to prison, and how they were treated. He also wished to know how they were treated in police stations, and how long they could legally be detained. Did any NGOs assist the Goverment in the administration of juvenile justice?

53. More information would be welcome concerning measures taken to combat drug abuse.

54. Mrs. MOKHUANE welcomed the efforts to introduce a child-centered curriculum in the schools, to provide more books, to reduce the disparities between rural and urban schools, and to establish teacher training programmes. Had those reforms been evaluated? If so, what were the results?

55. Mr. DOEK inquired how many children in Barbados were in conflict with the law, whether the requirement that an adult detainee should be brought before a judge within 72 hours also applied to children, and whether children benefited from legal assistance after arrest. He also wished to know whether children committed to the Government Industrial School could file a request for release, and whether they had an independent right to do so.

56. Miss MASON (Barbados) said that children who had been sentenced by the juvenile justice system could be held in a juvenile detention facility until they reached the age of 18. As the Juvenile Court could impose sentences ranging from three to five years, that meant in practice that a 15-year-old would receive a three-year sentence. Young offenders who behaved so badly in that facility that they were regarded as uncontrollable, were sent back to the court. The juvenile judicial officer would then conduct an inquiry and the court could order their transfer to the adult prison. As only 10 out of 100 places in the female section of the prison were in use, young people detained there would be segregated from any adult prisoners. In fact, none of the young delinquents who had been sentenced by the Juvenile Court were being held in the adult prison, whereas some 16 to 18-year-olds who had appeared before an adult court were being detained there.

57. In response to questions from Mr. Doek and Mr. Rabah, she said that, when a child was arrested, the arresting officers' first duty was to contact the parents. They were also obliged to summon a probation officer, failing which the case would be automatically dismissed by the court. It was customary for a child to be handed over to his or her parents to be brought before the court the following day. No child was ever kept in prison or in police custody overnight. Children could be taken to the Child Care Board if necessary or to the Government Industrial School if they were violent. NGOs provided assistance through being represented on the visiting boards of the Juvenile Liaison Scheme, the Industrial Schools and the prisons.

58. With regard to the question asked by Mr. Rabah, she said that all the relevant information concerning action to combat drug abuse was contained in the written reply to question 36. In reply to Mr. Doek's question, she conceded that there was a serious problem with regard to the collection of

statistics. There was a Central Statistical Office, but the data it collected often differed from police data, which were based on different indicators and could in turn differ from Juvenile Court data. As Ms. Crawford had said, every attempt would be made to furnish the Committee with more streamlined information when Barbados presented its second periodic report.

59. All children were entitled to legal aid, although it was refused by some parents who preferred their children to be disciplined by the courts. Criticism had been justly levelled at the discrimination against children implicit in sentencing under the juvenile justice system. That discrimination lay in the fact that, for a similar offence, an adult could be sentenced to perhaps one year's imprisonment, whereas a child had to be sent to reform school for three to five years. Any reduction of the child's sentence required a protracted process of application to the relevant authorities to have the child licensed out to the parents over a certain period. However, over the years it had become common practice, instead of sentencing a child to three years in reform school, to impose a sentence of perhaps one year, depending on the offence, in order to circumvent the long process entailed in having the sentence reduced. Legally, a child of 15 could be sentenced to three years' detention and a child of 13 to a five-year term, so that they would be released at age 18. Ways of remedying that discriminatory situation were under active consideration.

60. Ms. CRAWFORD (Barbados) said that all Barbadian children were entitled to free education up to the tertiary level. They were tested for passage from primary to secondary education by the common entrance examination, usually at age 11, after which they could opt to attend a free government secondary school, or a private - usually religious - secondary school, in which case the children received a bursary to assist with school needs.

61. Since the initial report had been submitted, the education system had been reviewed, culminating in the publication of a White Paper for implementation of an educational reform which had begun in 1995 and was currently being evaluated. It had been decided that the problem concerned not so much access to education, but its quality. Accordingly, the system of automatic placement had been made more flexible to enable children to defer the common entrance examination for one year, or, conversely, to take advantage of the fast-track system and sit the examination earlier, depending on their abilities. Under the reform, primary schoolchildren were tested in English and mathematics at the ages of 7 and 9 so that any deficiencies could be remedied in time for the common entrance examination. The sight and hearing of all children in the 5 to 11 age group were tested to ensure that their academic performance was not inhibited.

62. Primary schools were free and assistance with the purchase of textbooks and uniforms could be obtained through the welfare system. There were three official attendance officers who monitored absenteeism in the entire school system. They could apprehend children in public places, contact the parents and, where necessary, follow up their investigations in the child's home and make the appropriate referrals. One outcome of the educational reform was the Eductech 2000 Programme designed to improve the quality of textbooks.

63. All secondary schools possessed libraries, as did many primary schools. Pupils at those that did not had access to mobile libraries or the permanent libraries that existed in each parish. Although scholarships were awarded only for secondary education in private schools, education was compulsory and parents could be punished for failure to send their children to school.

64. Mr. GRIFFITH (Barbados), replying to the question about the Government budget said that the total budget was $1.9 billion, of which $1.6 billion was projected revenue, with $1.5 billion coming from tax revenue and $73 million from non-tax revenue. He would forward to Committee members copies of the Government's Estimate of Expenditure for 1999-2000, in which financing arrangements were explained in detail.

65. On the subject of globalization, while there were benefits for the industrialized countries, especially those which had partnerships with large multinational corporations, developing countries with small open economies, such as those in the Caribbean, were extremely vulnerable. For instance, the World Trade Organization had permitted the United States to impose sanctions on European countries offering preferential arrangements to banana-producing Caribbean islands. The Caribbean was perturbed lest the same should occur with the sugar industry. At a recent meeting of the Caribbean Development Bank, the Prime Minister of Barbados had stressed the need to restructure Caribbean economies within five years which would naturally call for a great deal of political will and massive investments.

66. The Government's manifesto addressed in detail the subject of poverty eradication, for which there was a productive partnership between the Government and the private sector, including NGOs. The Ministry of Social Transformation had been established specifically to deal with poverty and had a budget of $63 million. The Rural Development Commission and the Urban Development Commission played an important role in poverty eradication. The entire social service system would be placed under that single ministry which would comprise a sort of "one-stop shop" for all services. The NGO sector, including churches and community associations, would identify cases of need, because not all poor people were prepared to come forward. Assistance should be provided in such a way as not to undermine the dignity of the human person. Poverty alleviation was not simply a matter of money, but involved establishing the right conditions. Barbados would continue to improve its social services and endeavour to maintain the population growth rate at under 1 per cent.

67. The CHAIRPERSON invited Committee members to voice their concluding observations on the initial report of Barbados.

68. Mr. DOEK complimented the delegation on its presentation of the report and the written and oral replies, all of which had been highly informative. There were many positive aspects to be noted, including the activities of the National Committee for Monitoring the Rights of the Child and the Child Care Board, the activities relating to the care and protection of children with disabilities, and more energetic action to deal with child abuse and neglect. The issues which in his view called for attention were data collection and discrimination in the area of education, especially against the country's non-permanent residents. There was also a need for more specific legislation

to give children a voice in their own affairs; it appeared to be left to the discretion of the interlocutor to judge the child's maturity. He recommended that the authorities adopt a clear policy on foster care. Lastly, he was extremely alarmed at the figures for teenage births and abortions.

69. Mrs. KARP, endorsing Mr. Doek's complimentary remarks, said that she hoped that the newly established National Monitoring Committee would work to implement the plans and projects mentioned by the delegation and that the Committee's comments would be publicized when the delegation returned home. She also hoped that the Committee's recommendation would help enhance the status of children in Barbados.

70. Mrs. MOKHUANE congratulated the delegation on its fruitful dialogue with the Committee and on the fact that its very positive programmes and policies addressed most of the articles of the Convention. She was, however, deeply disturbed at the deficiencies in data collection and recommended that the authorities endeavour to establish useful statistics on such problems as child abuse and suicide. She hoped that the new National Plan would be sustained. Sustainability was a major problem that needed to be addressed for the good of Barbadian children in particular.

71. On the subject of corporal punishment, there appeared to be a consensus within the Committee that the practice of flogging needed to be addressed urgently. It spread the idea of violence in the home and in society as a whole, and was not a practice on which children's behaviour should be modelled. The educational initiatives launched in 1994 were impressive, but it was necessary to undertake studies to evaluate their outcome and the challenges and difficulties encountered in implementing them.

72. The CHAIRPERSON invited the delegation to respond to members' concluding observations.

73. Mr. GRIFFITH (Barbados) thanked the Committee for the opportunity it had offered his delegation to benefit from its vast knowledge and rich insight into matters pertaining to children in Barbados and, by extension, the world over. He would impress upon his authorities the need to consider ratifying the Convention against Torture.

74. A Caribbean-wide media competition, currently in progress, was focusing public attention on adolescent reproductive health and rights. Awards would be made to individual journalists and the media firms they worked for, the aim being to ensure forward movement on that issue throughout the Caribbean. He would inform his authorities of the Committee's dissatisfaction with data disaggregation procedures in Barbados, particularly with regard to budgetary spending on children's issues as opposed to administrative and other expenditure.

75. The shortage of social workers had arisen precisely because the training courses had been expanded. However, negotiations were being conducted with the University of the West Indies to accelerate training. Barbadian social workers who had been working in Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States were returning home, and the country would certainly take advantage of their training and experience.

76. He had noted the need for advocacy on gender issues, especially with regard to the role and responsibilities of men. That was a sociological problem requiring urgent attention to ensure the socialization of boys as well as girls. Twenty-five years earlier, men had benefited from higher levels of education than women and had dominated the major professions. That situation had been totally reversed, with women now accounting for 73 per cent of university graduates.

77. Two adolescent development centres had been asked to deal with young people about to leave residential care at age 18 under a programme designed, with the assistance of the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation and other private firms, to ensure adequate preparation for their return to society. The Elijah House Project, with non-uniformed staff and individual rooms, provided an opportunity for the residents to help operate the project and develop their vocational and leadership skills. A telethon was being planned to raise funds for the project. Serious attention would be given to speeding up the overhaul of the Reformatory and Industrial Schools (Amendment) Act. He was aware of the need to standardize statistical material and accelerate its computerization to make it more efficient and readily available.

78. On the delegation's return to Barbados, it would be his responsibility to submit to the National Committee for Monitoring the Rights of the Child a report containing specific recommendations on the action advocated at the current session and the required pace of implementation. The dialogue with the Committee had been an excellent learning experience and had provided valuable insight into child care as a whole.

79. The CHAIRPERSON said that she had been enormously impressed by the quality of the Barbadian delegation whose report - the first she had had to deal with as Chairperson - had given rise to an interesting and good-natured discussion. She expected the Committee's report and recommendations to be publicized in Barbados in due course.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.

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Twenty-first session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 537th MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 20 May 1999, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Mrs. MBOI

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Initial report of Saint Kitts and Nevis

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GE.99-42080 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS OF STATES PARTIES (agenda item 6) (continued)

Initial report of Saint Kitts and Nevis (CRC/C/3/Add.51; CRC/C/A/SKN.1; CRC/C/Q/SKN.1 (List of issues))

1. At the invitation of the Chairperson, Mr. Condor and Ms. Liburd (Saint Kitts and Nevis) took places at the Committee table.

2. Mr. CONDOR (Saint Kitts and Nevis) said that there had been negative population growth in his country during 10 of the 25 years between 1970 and 1995, while the crude birth rate had fallen faster than the crude death rate between 1981 and 1993. Thirty-six per cent of the population were under 15 and 10 per cent between 15 and 19 years of age. About one third of the annual budget was spent on social investment.

3. A good education system from primary through to tertiary level, with 100 per cent placement in secondary schooling, resulted in a high literacy rate. Government policy encouraged teenage mothers to return to school, yet many opted for evening institute classes. Special educational provision was made for the physically and mentally disadvantaged. Nevertheless, concerns and challenges included boys' lower reading ability and higher drop-out rates in primary schools, teenage pregnancy, the small number of male primary school teachers and low enrolment in science and mathematics classes and technical and vocational education. Measures had been taken to deal with truancy. All school-age children received free medical and dental care, after being given a full physical examination on entering primary school. In some schools, children were given free lunches to help alleviate poverty.

4. In the health care sector, priority was accorded to ensuring free access to medical services for all, improving health centres, promoting health education in relation to AIDS, drug abuse, mental health, prevalent diseases and disease prevention, and providing free clinical treatment for several ailments.

5. Legal provision had been made for children to take the name of fathers who acknowledged them or had been ordered to do so by the courts. Magistrates' courts were free to determine maintenance and they heard paternity disputes in camera. The courts dealt severely with sexual offences against minors and were empowered under the Juvenile Act to issue protection orders to safeguard children from abuse. Nevertheless, there was evidence that much abuse went unreported. Juvenile delinquents were held in detention or rehabilitation centres either under a court order or with the voluntary agreement of parents or guardians.

6. Full-time compulsory education left little opportunity for the exploitation of child labour. Despite limited financial and economic resources, all social and economic policies were geared to putting a human face on development.

7. Within the juvenile justice system, the right to privacy was respected and sentencing options had been widened. Adequate alternative care for children who had to be separated from their families on account of abuse or neglect was available, although the fundamental principle was that in normal circumstances the best place for a child to be raised was in his or her own home. Even when children had to be removed from an unsafe home or unfit parent, they were encouraged to remain in contact with their natural family. The foster care system and the single residential home operated in conformity with the Convention. His Government was totally committed to implementing the rights of the child.

8. The CHAIRPERSON, after expressing regret that Saint Kitts and Nevis had not replied in writing to the list of issues, invited the delegation to give short, concise answers to questions 1 to 6.

9. Ms. LIBURD (Saint Kitts and Nevis) said that written replies would be supplied as soon as possible. The Government was reviewing all laws on children and the family with the aim of harmonizing them with the Convention. An effort was being made to ensure that legislation was fully backed by administrative and operational mechanisms to implement the spirit and letter of the Convention. They included the Probation and Child Welfare Board whose 12 members were drawn from the public and private sectors of both islands, and a child-care agency which executed the day-to-day operations of the Board. The Government provided full funding for all the activities of the Board which was also responsible for coordinating and monitoring all children's rights issues. The Government encouraged the few non-governmental organizations (NGOs) present on the islands to participate in that process.

10. Children whose rights were violated had permanent access to the relevant services, including the police and social welfare institutions, so a complaints mechanism was not an immediate priority.

11. Compliance with the Convention's requirements was hampered by the limited capacity of institutional centres and the lack of a central registry for statistics, but a database office was being set up. Although legislation provided for a national response to child abuse, some agencies failed to pass on information. A national task force had been established to draft a policy of inclusion for children with disabilities. Although overall statistics were kept on children in conflict with the law and in institutional care, no breakdown of the figures was available. The absence of disaggregated data had not, however, prevented the formulation of policies and programmes to implement the Convention. Saint Kitts and Nevis was engaged in an ongoing process of community education to heighten awareness of the Convention. Since it had been recognized that training was one of the main ingredients in the effective delivery of child care, in-service programmes and secondment abroad were arranged with a view to upgrading professional skills.

12. The CHAIRPERSON invited the members of the Committee to make comments and raise questions.

13. Mrs. KARP said that, since the Probation and Child Welfare Board was the focal point for securing the rights of the child, she wished to know how long the Board had been in existence and what its achievements were to date. Why

had the Board, which was mainly a welfare service, been given chief responsibility for implementing children's rights? What was the overall approach to and policy for disseminating the Convention's message about participation and the notion that a child was a person with inalienable rights? Since the Board was an operational service provider, how could it monitor its own activities? Monitoring had to be conducted by an external body. Had the feasibility of setting up such a body been discussed? Inasmuch as responsibility for children's rights lay with the Ministry for Trade, Industry, CARICOM Affairs, Youth, Sports and Community Affairs, she wondered how a ministry with such a wide remit could protect the best interests of the child, when there were bound to be conflicts of interest in budgetary allocation. Had consideration been given to establishing an office for children's rights? How was priority given to children's issues? How much of the country's legislation really reflected the basic principles and articles of the Convention? What specific amendments had been introduced since ratification of the Convention? Lastly, she inquired whether the country would benefit from technical assistance in the statistical field.

14. Mr. FULCI drew attention to the lack of statistical data in the report. He asked what major aspects of the Convention were not covered by existing legislation. Had non-governmental organizations been involved in the preparation of the report? Had measures been taken to heighten professional groups' awareness of the Convention? Had consideration been given to the establishment of an independent body directly accountable to Parliament, which would be in charge of monitoring observance of children's rights?

15. Mr. RABAH asked what had caused the country's negative population growth, particularly since children accounted for more than half the population. It would be useful to know what changes the Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act had instituted on behalf of children. In addition, the Government should indicate the size of the budgetary allocation for children.

16. Mrs. SARDENBERG said that she had been pleased to learn that all children in Saint Kitts and Nevis were assured of secondary school enrolment and immunization. The country also had a high per capita income and a good rating on the human development index. She inquired how the country had been affected by Hurricane George, in September 1998, and what measures had been taken to repair any damage caused.

17. She regretted that the report was so short. Saint Kitts and Nevis had nevertheless been one of the first countries in the Caribbean region to ratify the Convention, which attested to its interest in children's issues. The report indicated that the country had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, but made no mention of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment or the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. Where did Saint Kitts and Nevis stand with regard to those four essential human rights instruments? It would also

be useful to know what steps had been taken by the Government to enact legislation for the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

18. She asked whether the Probation and Child Welfare Board had begun its work; information on its structure, membership and funding arrangements would be welcome. Had the Government evaluated the comprehensive and integrated approach to children's rights adopted by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health and Women's Affairs? Finally, it would be useful to know whether the Government had disseminated the report or intended to do so.

19. Mrs. MOKHUANE asked what percentage of the national budget was allocated to children's issues, and how those resources were distributed so as directly to benefit children. She also wished to know what domestic legislative measures, if any, had been taken to relieve the impact of the increase in divorce and single parenthood on children, children's relations with their parents, and the family environment.

20. What was the cause of the late submission of the report?

21. Mrs. TIGERSTEDT-TÄHTELÄ inquired whether Saint Kitts and Nevis received international funding from sources other than UNICEF. What were the country's funding needs?

The meeting was suspended at 10.55 a.m. and resumed at 11.05 a.m.

22. Mr. CONDOR (Saint Kitts and Nevis) said that his delegation was pleased to discover that the dialogue with the Committee was an ongoing one, designed to provide sustained assistance and support to countries endeavouring to implement the terms of the Convention. The delegation had circulated to the members of the Committee a list of the relevant national laws enacted to date. Although the Constitution prohibited discrimination, domestic legislation was clearly needed to enforce that prohibition.

23. The only significant ongoing international support received by Saint Kitts and Nevis came from UNICEF; a great deal of additional technical support was needed.

24. Hurricane George had devastated the country. It had destroyed three schools, damaged several others and destroyed the main hospital. In fact, all institutions had been gravely affected. Assistance had been received from the European Union for the reconstruction of the hospital. In all, the damage had amounted to an estimated US$ 500 million.

25. The name of his Ministry was perhaps misleading, as it comprised two branches with separate functions: Trade, Industry and CARICOM Affairs on the one hand, and Youth, Sports and Community Affairs on the other. Youth, sports and community affairs were grouped together because they involved the participation of children. He assured the Committee that children's rights received appropriate recognition and attention. On the question concerning the budgetary allocation for children, he would need to examine the budgets of various ministries, including those responsible for health, education and women's affairs.

26. The Ministry of Youth, Sports and Community Affairs considered childhood as the years from birth through age 25. As part of the ongoing efforts to raise awareness about children's issues, Child Month was celebrated yearly and each year featured a theme from the Convention. Monthly events were organized to discuss children's issues. Responsibility for monitoring the Probation and Child Welfare Board lay with the Ministry of Youth, Sports and Community Affairs, although assistance was also provided by NGOs, in particular by the Family Planning Association.

27. In pursuit of training opportunities, the Government regularly sent police officers, lawyers, probation officers and other officials to the United Kingdom on secondment, and children's rights were promoted by the inclusion of young people in decision-making bodies whenever possible.

28. Ms. LIBURD (Saint Kitts and Nevis) said that the notion of children's rights was not readily accepted in Caribbean society. The Government was attempting, through parent and teacher associations, to raise awareness of the Convention, in particular among children. The Probation and Child Welfare Board was made up of representatives of the ministries, service organizations and NGOs and was answerable to the Ministry of Youth, Sports and Community Affairs, which monitored its activities. The creation of an independent monitoring body had not been envisaged. Since the terms of the Convention were enshrined in the Constitution, compliance had not been expected to be a problem.

29. Mr. CONDOR (Saint Kitts and Nevis) said that, when the current Government had taken office in 1995, the report to the Committee had been incomplete. It had been completed and revised by the Government, and then widely disseminated, and that accounted for the delay in its submission.

30. The CHAIRPERSON invited the members of the Committee to raise questions regarding the definition of the child.

31. Mrs. KARP inquired whether Saint Kitts and Nevis had devised a national plan of action for children, and whether the Probation and Child Welfare Board was responsible for making policy decisions regarding children. The Convention took an integrated approach to the matter of children's rights, and States parties should endeavour to do the same. In Saint Kitts and Nevis, children's issues were handled by various ministries, thus making it difficult to establish priorities and long-term strategies.

32. She asked what measures had been taken to raise awareness among teachers, and whether the Convention was included in teacher-training programmes and seminars. Teachers must learn to conduct a dialogue with children, and not simply to wield authority. She also wished to know how children in Saint Kitts and Nevis reacted to learning about the Convention.

33. It was surprising that the Ministry of Youth, Sports and Community Affairs considered childhood to end at age 25. If the Convention was to be properly implemented, an effective statistical system would have to be established for the collection and assessment of data relating to persons under the age of 18.

34. Was it the doctor who decided whether a child was sufficiently mature to receive medical counselling without parental consent? It would be useful to know whether the Government had considered introducing legislation that would provide for a supervised system of such counselling, taking special account of the needs of adolescents.

35. Mrs. OUEDRAOGO, observing that the report acknowledged that children from Saint Kitts and Nevis needed to be educated and to seek employment abroad, wondered whether that trend posed the risk that the country would lose its intellectual elite. Had the Government considered setting up a programme that would encourage young people to return to the country after studying abroad?

36. More information would be welcome on the participation of NGOs in the implementation of the Convention and in the preparation of the report. How did the Government coordinate its work with NGOs? She also wished to know what proportion of the population participated in Child Month, and to what extent its participation resulted in a better understanding of the Convention.

37. In view of the high literacy rate, 16 was a rather young minimum age for marriage without parental approval, and she wondered whether a higher minimum age was observed in practice. Was there a relationship between the minimum working age, the high literacy rate, and the lack of employment for young people?

38. Mrs. SARDENBERG asked if the country report had already been disseminated in Saint Kitts and Nevis and requested information on the process of drawing up the report. The written replies showed that a review of national legislation had been completed; the measures already being taken as a result of the review should be continued. The enactment of laws that conformed to the Convention would be an important step towards its effective implementation.

39. The Probation and Child Welfare Board, composed of members from both the public and the private sector, should be encouraged to work in cooperation with other organs of Government in order to achieve the global approach to the rights of the child that was central to the Convention. She welcomed the idea of a programme of action and said that consideration of the rights of the child should be integrated into the work already being done in the areas of health and education.

40. She urged the Government to establish a central registry for statistics covering all areas of the Convention, a measure routinely recommended to States parties by the Committee. Since the delegation had referred to the Government's wish to receive technical assistance in that regard, perhaps the specialized agencies of the United Nations and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights could provide such assistance. It was important to have a clear picture of the situation of children in the country in order to formulate adequate policies.

41. Mrs. KARP, noting that the Prevention of Cruelty and Protection of Juveniles Clause applied to children under 16 only, asked why it did not also give children aged 16 to 18 the protection required under the Convention.

42. Mrs. MOKHUANE, noting the provision made under the new Maintenance of Children Act for ensuring that parents paid for the upkeep of their children, asked if a monitoring system was in place to ensure that the Act was enforced. She also expressed concern that the age of criminal responsibility was eight, because an eight-year-old was not capable of understanding the ramifications of a criminal act and did not have the intelligence to understand the legal process. She therefore urged the Government to raise the age of criminal responsibility.

43. Mr. CONDOR (Saint Kitts and Nevis) said that Child Month was a major national event in which many children participated. A different theme, based on an aspect of the Convention, was selected for Child Month each year.

44. The national plan of action for children was always drawn up by the Cabinet, with input from all the ministries which dealt with children's issues. He himself was responsible for reporting both to the Cabinet and to individual ministries on his delegation's dialogue with the Committee and the Cabinet would then publicize that information via nationwide media.

45. There was some resistance among teachers to the implementation of certain articles of the Convention, but efforts were being made to increase their awareness and the Convention was now becoming an integral part of the education system.

46. One problem that had arisen concerned the different minimum ages applied to different activities: each organization and institution imposed its own minimum age. Nevertheless, efforts were being made to conform to the Convention in that regard. Children's rights were applied universally.

47. Mrs. KARP said that it was natural for different minimum ages to be applied to different issues. However, the Prevention of Cruelty and Protection of Juveniles Clause provided for protection of children under 16 only, and that conflicted with the Probation and Child Welfare Board Act, which provided for protection of children up to the age of 18.

48. Mr. CONDOR (Saint Kitts and Nevis) agreed that such discrepancies needed to be resolved.

49. The "brain drain" from Saint Kitts and Nevis had been a serious problem in the past because higher education was not a suitable preparation for work on plantations, formerly the country's dominant economic activity. Hence, many educated people had gone to live abroad. However, since the economy was now diversifying, other types of employment were becoming available and people were being encouraged to stay in the country.

50. In the past, the minimum age for employment had been 16, because that had been the usual school-leaving age. The minimum age now was either 18 or the age at which post-secondary education was completed.

51. Much work had gone into the elaboration of the report, with regular imput from all branches of Government. Unfortunately, no resources were available to create a separate Ministry of Youth, but all the ministries cooperated closely on issues affecting children.

52. Ms. LIBURD (Saint Kitts and Nevis) said that there were not many NGOs in Saint Kitts and Nevis; however, those that did exist, such as the Family Planning Association, church organizations and the National Youth Council, along with the private sector, had all contributed to the country report. Meetings with them would continue and they would also be involved in drawing up the next report.

53. Regarding the question of medical counselling without parental consent, she said that it was unusual for children in her country to visit a doctor unaccompanied by a parent, although 16- and 17-year-olds made use of family planning services. A nurse always assisted the doctor in cases where a parent was not present and, if necessary, the child was referred to a trained counsellor within the health system.

54. Mrs. KARP asked if free counselling was available for adolescents and whether it was well publicized.

55. Ms. LIBURD (Saint Kitts and Nevis) said that there were trained counsellors in the Department of Youth and Community Affairs and that there was a system of referrals by, for example, doctors, teachers and health centres.

56. Mr. CONDOR (Saint Kitts and Nevis) added that the counselling facilities were very well publicized.

57. The Government would be willing to consider raising the age of criminal responsibility which was currently eight.

58. Mrs. KARP asked what action had so far been taken by the Probation and Child Welfare Board.

59. Ms. LIBURD (Saint Kitts and Nevis) said that the Board had been functioning since 1994 and had assumed responsibility for establishing rules and regulations in respect of children in custodial care. It had also set up a children's home which took in not only orphans but also neglected or abused children. It had established rules and regulations for foster care and the monitoring of foster parents and children. In addition, the Board supervised day-care centres and a rehabilitation centre for boys. It dealt with all aspects of the rights of the child and was also responsible for training staff.

60. The CHAIRPERSON suggested moving on to questions regarding general principles and civil rights and freedoms.

61. Mrs. SARDENBERG noted from the written replies that children in Nevis did not always enjoy the same opportunities as children in Saint Kitts, even though the children of both islands had equal rights under the Constitution. How was that problem being addressed by the Government? Regarding article 2 of the Convention, although the Constitution provided for protection against discrimination, the report did not address that issue from a practical point of view. For example, was there discrimination against girls within the family, schools or the job market?

62. The Committee attached particular importance to the child's right to express his or her views, as set forth in article 12 of the Convention, although it had been difficult to involve Governments and parents in implementing that right. Could more information be provided on the programme being established in Saint Kitts and Nevis to deal with that issue? How would the early results of the programme be evaluated?

63. Mrs. MOKHUANE, noting that a task force had been set up to draft a policy for children with disabilities, asked what the policy would entail and what legal provision would be made for disabled children's everyday practical needs and for safeguarding their interests in general. In the context of article 12, would disabled children have any input into policy-making?

64. Mrs. KARP said that article 12 of the Convention had proved decisive in changing attitudes to children by adding the principle of participation to the principles of protection and welfare on which the treatment of children had previously been based. The report did not indicate whether any legislation existed in specific fields, such as adoption, to guide judges and other professionals in care institutions and the juvenile justice system and to provide for the child's views to be taken into account before any decision affecting him or her was made. Did the Government plan to introduce any such legislation?

65. Did a complaints procedure exist whereby children's complaints could be heard by an independent body? Were children aware that they had the right to complain and were they given effective redress?

66. She welcomed the idea of having child parliamentarians and asked if it was being implemented. What structures existed in schools to involve children in social life?

67. No examples were given in the report of how the courts had interpreted the best interests of the child, especially in divorce cases where the parents could not necessarily be relied upon to act in the child's best interests.

68. Regarding the issue of civil rights, the report gave no indication of whether corporal punishment was permitted in schools or in the juvenile justice system; she assumed that it was used within the family. She emphasized the Committee's view that corporal punishment was not compatible with the provisions of the Convention. Therefore, not only should it be prohibited in schools and in the juvenile justice system, but States parties should undertake to teach parents that such punishment was counter-productive and help them to find alternative methods of discipline. Were there any plans to address that issue, for example by organizing publicity campaigns or by introducing legislation to prohibit corporal punishment?

69. Mr. RABAH asked whether there was any discrimination against minorities in Saint Kitts and Nevis. He also inquired about the criteria for acquiring citizenship and the impact on a child of a parent's loss of citizenship. How were children protected from harmful information pertaining to violence and pornography, especially on the Internet?

70. Mrs. OUEDRAOGO noted from the report that all persons had the right to seek redress for rights violations. She asked what structure was in place for children to exercise that right and how accessible it was to them. She also wished to know what measures were being taken to protect children's privacy at home and at school with regard to their correspondence and telephone calls. In a society where it was widely believed that children should be seen but not heard, she wondered whether there had been any progress towards ensuring that they could voice their opinions.

71. Concerning the right to life and survival, and given the high rate of teenage pregnancy, was there a programme to prevent girls from seeking abortions? Lastly, how did Saint Kitts and Nevis protect children from access to harmful media, especially in view of technological advances such as the Internet, which was notorious for its portrayal of violence and pornography?

72. Mr. CONDOR (Saint Kitts and Nevis) thanked the Committee members for raising many pertinent issues, which he was sure would be of assistance to his country in carrying forward the process of child protection. He would be less than honest if he claimed that corporal punishment did not exist or that it would soon disappear. However, such was the level of Government concern that the issue was now being addressed by a recently established task force headed by the Attorney-General, with NGO participation. Admittedly most of the population wished to see such punishment maintained, but he hoped that a more enlightened view would soon prevail.

73. A delicate balance had to be struck between children's right to privacy, in respect of correspondence and telephone calls for instance, and the need for parental control to protect them from harmful information. That balance called for a frank and open dialogue.

74. While there was no legal structure for the exercise of children's right to redress, many new avenues were opening up within the community. Children sat on school boards; there was a children's home board and a board of the Harris Home for Boys on which NGOs were represented. There was no family court, but in proceedings before the Juvenile Court children were heard in camera, counselled by officials of the Department of Community Affairs and represented by probation officers. Children were encouraged to come forward and they showed no fear in voicing their complaints.

75. On the subject of children being heard, much criticism was being levelled at his Ministry by those who claimed that excessive democratization and participation of children in running institutions and society were eroding morals and values.

76. Concerning the differences between the two islands, he explained that Saint Kitts and Nevis, unlike the other four twin-island countries in the Caribbean, was unique in that it was a federal, rather than a unitary, State in which Nevis had its own Government and enjoyed a certain amount of autonomy. However, both islands were governed by the same Constitution and there was no discrimination. Inhabitants of the smaller sister island of Nevis might claim that they were discriminated against in terms of resources, but government policies on health care, education and youth applied to them on an equal footing.

77. Ms. LIBURD (Saint Kitts and Nevis) added that a Cabinet decision giving teenage mothers the right to return to school was not being applied by the Nevis authorities. However, efforts were being made to secure their compliance.

78. Mr. CONDOR (Saint Kitts and Nevis) said that another case in point was the law on gambling. Saint Kitts and Nevis had a lottery in which all persons were entitled to participate, but which the Nevis authorities refused to operate. In reply to Mr. Rabah's question, he said that, if anything, the minority discriminated against the majority. Discrimination against minorities had never been a part of the country's culture.

79. In response to Mrs. Mokhuane's question, he said that a council for the disabled had been in existence for 15 years. There was a school for the deaf, a school for the disabled and a special school for the mentally handicapped. A new special school for the disabled was being custom-built to their own specifications and equipped with all the necessary facilities. Disabled children also competed internationally in the Special Olympics, which had produced some of the country's finest athletes.

80. Ms. LIBURD (Saint Kitts and Nevis), replying to a question from the Chairperson, said that there was room for improvement in the matter of the social integration of persons with minor physical disabilities. A committee had been established to deal with that issue. Replying to Mrs. Karp, she said that the courts did operate in the best interests of the child. Abandoned children were usually taken in hand by the Probation and Child Welfare Board. On the basis of an inquiry report, the courts determined whether such children could safely be returned to their parents; if the parents were deemed unfit, they were placed in foster care or a children's home or offered for adoption.

81. In reply to Mr. Rabah's question concerning citizenship, she said that the system of dual citizenship precluded loss of nationality. Citizenship was acquired by birth through the mother or father and by marriage.

82. The CHAIRPERSON reiterated Mrs. Ouedraogo's question concerning abortion and asked whether any social stigma attached to an unmarried girl who became pregnant.

83. Ms LIBURD (Saint Kitts and Nevis) replied that abortion was illegal. As in most of the Caribbean countries, there was a long tradition of reliance on the extended family. If a teenage mother was unable to care for her child, another family member - usually the girl's mother - took over that responsibility and could receive assistance through the welfare system. The girl could return to school or, as many chose to do, attend an evening institute. Any stigma attaching to unmarried mothers had long disappeared from Saint Kitts and Nevis society.

84. Mrs. KARP thought that failure to terminate a teenage pregnancy might damage a young mother's development. She wondered whether abortion should not be made legal in such cases.

85. The CHAIRPERSON asked what procedures existed to prevent a young girl who had been raped from giving birth, and to avoid jeopardizing both her mental and physical health.

86. Ms. LIBURD (Saint Kitts and Nevis) said that mental health criteria were not part of the equation. A pregnancy could be terminated only on strictly medical grounds.

87. The CHAIRPERSON invited members to ask questions concerning family environment and alternative care.

88. Mr. FULCI, citing the country's Adoption Act which provided for adoption approved by the High Court, wondered whether children themselves had any say in the matter. He inquired about the annual adoption figures and asked whether the authorities envisaged ratifying the 1993 Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption. Were boys more often abandoned than girls and less frequently chosen for adoption, as was the case in other Caribbean islands?

89. Mr. DOEK pointed out that, although all children physically had a father and mother, that was not the case legally. The high rate of births out of wedlock placed many children in an extremely vulnerable position, not least in financial terms. Marriage usually resulted in a woman's husband being regarded as the father of her child. Did cohabitation impose paternal obligations in Saint Kitts and Nevis? What if the man denied paternity? A child born out of wedlock had as much right to know the identity of his or her father as the child of a married couple. What was the state of the legislation on that issue and what steps were being taken to ensure that delinquent fathers were pursued?

90. Ms. KARP asked what concrete measures the country was taking to ensure children's participation. It might consider using the next Child Day to focus attention on that issue. She was aware that corporal publishment was a deeply entrenched tradition. It was not country-specific and could be found throughout the world. She applauded the establishment of a task force to address that difficult problem, but suggested that the authorities might seek assistance from a number of European countries which had succeeded in eradicating corporal punishment and could provide valuable advice.

91. She asked what complaints mechanism existed for children in care or juvenile justice institutions, who were dependent on their carers and could hardly voice complaints in their presence. Did the regulations provide for external visitors, similar to school inspectors, to whom children could complain in private?

92. While she understood that discrimination was prohibited by law, she suggested that de facto discrimination against Nevis might result from differences in resource allocation and budget implementation. That in turn could affect the quality of the services on offer. She asked whether, as a general rule, children's opinions had to be sought in advance on any decision concerning them.

93. Turning to family environment, she said that she had learned some interesting facts about the country, one being the popularity of the "visiting union" relationship between men and women. By what rules was such a union governed? She feared that the children of the union would suffer psychologically from the lack of a male role model and the other drawbacks of that type of relationship.

94. Mrs. MOKHUANE asked whether there was any process whereby young mothers could seek redress with regard to paternity issues. What legal steps were being taken to oblige the large number of delinquent fathers to fulfil their responsibilities?

95. She reiterated the request contained in the list of issues that the Government report on the steps it was taking to address children's problems arising from common-law unions and single parenthood. Lastly, on the subject of alternative care, she wished to know how often institutions and foster parents were evaluated.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.